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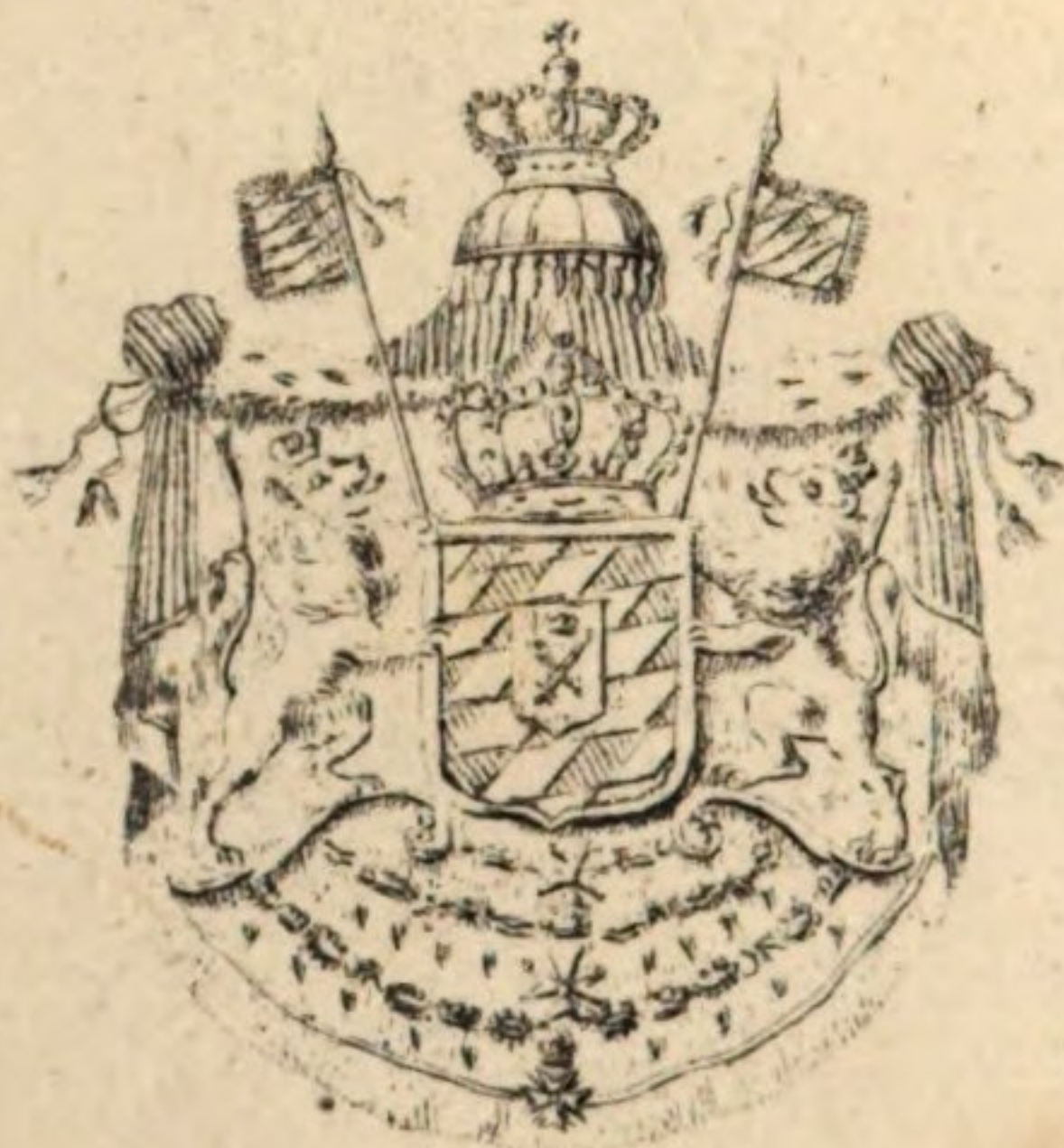
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M E M O I R S

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, A. M.

WITH A REVIEW OF HIS

LIFE AND WRITINGS,

AND A

HISTORY OF METHODISM,

From it's Commencement in 1729, to the present time.

By JOHN HAMPSON, A. B.

Καὶ ἴσῃ δὴ οἷος ἢ Χαίρεφω, ὡς σφοδρὸς ἐφ' οὗ,
τὶ ὀρμησέῃ. PLATO.

V O L. II.

SUNDERLAND:

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M E M M O I R S

OF THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY, A. M.

C H A P. I.

RETURN TO ENGLAND AND COMMENCEMENT OF
ITINERANCY AND FIELD-PREACHING.

ON the 16th of September 1738,
Mr Wesley returned to London;
and began to exhort and preach, which he
frequently did three or four times a day, at
Newgate and in different parts of the city.
He still retained his fellowship; but made
several excursions into the country, and

with astonishing rapidity, made a multitude of converts, and established societies in different parts of the kingdom. The reproaches poured upon him from various quarters, and the reports eagerly circulated against him, seem to have had no other effect, than to stimulate his courage and inflame his zeal. Whether followed or despised, persecuted or applauded, he never lost sight of his object, nor for a moment ceased to labour with the spirit of a Luther, and the gravity and authority of an apostle.

His own opinion of the undertaking in which he was engaged, was as great as that of his antagonists was contemptuous. The appellation by which he constantly distinguishes it is, “the work of God;” and in one passage of his History of Methodism, he makes a digression, to inform the reader, that it is no “cant

word," and means the "conversion of sinners from sin to holiness!" Innumerable passages in his writings shew, that he considered himself and his brethren as instruments chosen of God for it's accomplishment. We select one from the last sermon in the fifth volume, where he speaks of his first labours in the methodistic vineyard: "A few young, raw heads, said the Bishop of London! what can they pretend to do? They pretended to be that in the hand of God, that a pen is in the hand of a man. They pretended, and do so at this day, to do the work whereunto they are sent: to do just what the Lord pleased. And if it be his pleasure to throw down the walls of Jericho, the strong holds of Satan, not by the engines of war, but by the blasts of rams' horns, who shall say unto him, what dost thou?"

He considered methodism as a grand revival of religion ; declares his astonishment at Bengelius (who though he said all the prophecies would incline him to fix it a century sooner, had stated this revival as taking place in 1836, because he knew of no remarkable work God had wrought on the earth between 1730 and 1740) and plainly assures the world, that he regarded it as the principal event preparatory to the glory of the latter days, and the conversion of all nations to the faith of Christ.

Though prior to Mr Whitefield in the society instituted at Oxford, he seems to have been preceded by him in itinerancy and field preaching, as the latter entered upon his course during our missionary's absence in America. It is said indeed that Mr Wesley had preached in the open air in 1735. On what occasion

we know not ; but it appears to have been purely accidental, and was discontinued till 1738.

We have been the more particular in the relation of his conversion, his views of religion, and the circumstances preparatory to his entrance on public life, that the reader may form his own conclusions upon them, and be the better prepared to judge of the causes of the opposition he encountered, and his subsequent success. The former has often excited our indignation, though never our astonishment. But we are not a little surprised to find, that several religious characters, and some even of his first and best friends at Oxford, thinking perhaps that he carried matters to too great lengths, turned their backs on him, and were ashamed to be seen with him in the streets. This was particularly the case with Mr Gam-

bold, one of the early methodists ; afterwards, in connection with Zinzendorff ; and we believe, a bishop among the “ *unitas fratrum*.” This gentleman was the author of a poem, called Religious Discourse, and of the tragedy of Ignatius. When Mr Wesley consulted him, with regard to his exercises for the degree of B. D. and particularly concerning the subject of his sermon on the occasion, he told him it was of no sort of consequence ; and that not a man in Oxford would mind one word he said. Soon after, happening to meet him in the street, Mr Gambold plainly told him, that he was ashamed of his company, and must be excused from going to the society with him. We need not say, that he was piqued at this behaviour. “ This, he observes, was plain dealing at least.”

The exercises in question were not performed.

His original plan seems to have been to form an union of clergymen, and to prosecute his projects by their ministry : but it was found impracticable. Whether they were prevented from joining him by the odium of methodism, or did not chuse to acknowledge him as their head (for we think he would have taken no equal or subordinate part) or whatever else was the cause, this scheme could never be accomplished.

A letter, written in 1742, is now before us, in which he wishes for a clerical assistant, were he only in deacon's orders ; but adds, " I know none such, who is willing to cast in his lot with us. And I scarce expect I shall : because I know how fast they are riveted in the service of the world and the devil, before they

leave the university.” He was not much more successful among the clergy in the subsequent, than in the first stages of itinerancy ; and after several attempts by circular letters, and other means, perceiving the impossibility of the projected union, he said, they were a mere “ rope of sand,” and finally left them to their own imaginations.

As he had little to expect from this quarter, his only resource was in lay preachers. The classes and other meetings for prayer and exhortation, which were always extemporaneous, and where any one was permitted to make trial of his talents, was a nursery exactly suited to his purpose ; and soon furnished him with a variety of itinerants, of different characters and abilities. At first we believe his orthodoxy was staggered. But what was to be done ? The “ duris

urgens in rebus egestas" rendered it absolutely necessary, either to confine himself within the sphere of his own activity, and that of his brother, or to accept such coadjutors as should present themselves. He determined upon the latter ; and this decision at once fixed him at the head of a sect ; while his learning and abilities, with his academical and ecclesiastical distinctions, could not but raise him to a decided pre-eminence above his brethren of the itinerancy.

Hence we find, that when any disputes arose concerning his power, he contended for it with all his might, and ever deemed it his inalienable prerogative. The people having formed themselves into societies under his direction, and the preachers being admitted with his consent, he considered his authority equally absolute and indisputable ; and regard-

ed, or professed to regard it, as the immediate gift of God. We stop not now to enquire whether it was so or not. But we beg leave to remind every man, who is in authority, civil or ecclesiastical, that, whether that authority be of human or divine original ; whether brought about by some fortunate combination of circumstances, or acquired by the dexterity of it's possessor ; it is, in either case, capable of abuse. We do not scruple to say, that Mr Wesley made too much use of his power. We call it by the softest name ; and, in the course of these memoirs, we may produce authorities to prove that he did so.

As his mode of preaching had given general offence to the clergy, it will easily be conceived, that his appointment of lay preachers would not lessen it. The question we are now considering, is not

the propriety or impropriety of such a designation, but in what manner it would strike the clergy. Such a violation of order was the natural occasion of insuperable prejudices. It seems to have been agreed, among people of almost all religions, that a learned education is at least a valuable prerequisite for the ministry: and decency seems to require that there shall be a solemn examination, and, in some form or other, a public and authorised ordination to the sacred office. In Mr Wesley's plan, most of these requisites are wanting. That many of them were men of piety is unquestionable. But not a few of his preachers had received no adequate education. Some were as deficient in natural as in acquired abilities; and not one of them is ever examined or ordained in any form of ordination; those only excepted, to whom he

gave ordination for Scotland and America, with two or three clergymen, who, to assist him, by reading prayers in London, had entered into the connection. When we say that his preachers are not examined, we mean that their examination is inadequate, and nothing to the purpose ; and that many of the questions proposed at the presentation of the candidates, are a burlesque upon examinations. The want of a solemn form of ordination, which we remark as a capital defect, has been variously accounted for. Some say, that it originated in the impossibility of procuring episcopal, and the dislike he had to presbyterian ordination. Others have imagined a less favourable reason ; and recollecting that he often reminded his preachers of their having nothing to do with the character of gentlemen, are of opinion, that he

was averse to any form of ordination, lest it should produce among them notions of equality ; having settled it as a principle, that there should be no gentleman in the connection but himself. But there is no end of conjecture. The reader will take which of these hypotheses he likes best. We shall only observe, that the admission of lay preachers was of course considered by the clergy as an improvement upon his former eccentricities ; and the doors of the churches, in most parts of the kingdom, as well as in the metropolis, were shut against him.

Thus excluded from the churches, he was reduced to a kind of necessity of preaching in houses and in the fields ; and being gradually reinforced by numerous auxiliaries, he presently extended his labours and his success. Within a much

shorter period than could be expected, he visited in person most parts of the kingdom; while his preachers were equally diligent in forming circuits, in which they included every place where they could procure a congregation: nor did they fail to collect them in many situations, though at a great distance from the churches and other places of worship. As the people increased, so did the itinerants; who in a few years established societies and erected meeting-houses in all the principal towns, and wherever the societies became numerous.

Mr Wesley's first essay in field-preaching appears not to have been adventured without some deliberation; and it was finally determined upon, in consequence of the example set him, the day before, by Mr Whitefield, who had lately return-

ed from America. It seems, it was some time before he could reconcile himself to “this strange way:” but happening, or perhaps chusing, by way of preparation, to expound to his congregation at Bristol the sermon on the mount, which, he observes, is “one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching;” and being encouraged by the countenance of his old friend, he gave his scruples to the winds, and took the field on an eminence, in the suburbs of Bristol, on the 2d of April, 1739. A memorialist, in one of the magazines, who has made himself very merry at his expence, remarks, that this event will form “an epoch of some consequence in the ecclesiastical history of the eighteenth century.”

It will hardly be expected, and it is indeed impossible, if we would avoid end-

less repetitions, that we should follow Mr Wesley through the track laid down in his Journals. We can only touch upon the principal events. From 1738 to 1747, he and his Brethren were employed in various parts of England; particularly in London, Bristol and Newcastle upon Tyne, in Lincolnshire, Staffordshire and Cornwall; and among the colliers both at Kingwood and in the north. In August, 1747, he went over to Dublin, where a society had been collected by a Mr Williams, who we believe was a clergyman, or at least officiated in that character. Considering the immense number of papists (who are not easily proselyted) and the fierceness of their opposers, Mr Wesley and his fellow labourers were more successful than could have been expected. In 1790, they had erected meeting-houses in every part of the king-

dom; and had formed twenty-nine circuits, which employed sixty-seven itinerants, and a considerable number of local preachers.

The methodists of this country have been long distinguished among the mob, by the elegant term, *swoadlers*. Mr Wesley seems to have been much pleased with the character and behaviour of the Irish, and agrees with every candid observer of that polite and hospitable people, in giving them the just praise of their liberal and courteous manners. In those attentions which constitute one great charm of civil society, and are peculiarly grateful to a stranger, we know not whether they are equalled: they certainly are not exceeded by any people we have known. Mr Wesley has somewhere observed, that he has seen as true courtesy in an Irish cabin, as could have been

found at St. James's, or the Louvre.

It was not till April, 1751, that, invited by an officer in quarters at Muffelborough, he made his first tour into Scotland. In this town he preached once or twice; but made no stay. In April 1753, he visited the north once more, and went immediately to Glasgow. Here, at Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness, and a few other places, societies were at length established; but his success in Scotland, and in the other parts of the nation, bear no sort of proportion. In 1790, the number of circuits, north of Tweed, was no more than eight; which were supplied by twenty itinerants. That of the people was equally inconsiderable. To the little success of methodism in Scotland, several things might contribute: but we are inclined to ascribe it principally to three causes;

the reverence they have for their own clergy, their extreme bigotry, and their invincible dislike to the methodistic discipline. Among a people so attached to their ministers, he, who would succeed in making profelytes, must be a man of extraordinary talents, or possessed of some peculiar art of acquiring popularity. To the discipline introduced by Mr Wesley, our northern neighbours have ever discovered the most unqualified dislike. The mode of question and answer, in the meeting of the classes, by an unlucky combination, a member of the kirk instantly associates with the ceremony of auricular confession: nor can all the authority of the text quoted from St. James *, cancel the prejudice of this unfortunate association. As for the

* James v. 16.

bigotry of the Scots, it is so notorious, that nothing need be said upon it. Another reason that has been assigned, is the non-administration of baptism and the Lord's supper. But this, however plausible in theory, is confuted by facts. Several of the preachers in Scotland have received presbyterian ordination, and actually administer these ordinances; but we do not hear that this circumstance has had the influence that was expected.

The persecution of the itinerants and their congregations has been mentioned. But it deserves a more particular attention. They had proceeded not very far on their plan of reformation, when Mr Wesley's old doctrine came into practice, and he found, as his brother had predicted, "as much contempt as his heart could wish." Methodism, as christianity had been before, was the acci-

dental cause of much evil. It produced a general ferment in the minds of men, and divided the nation into three parties; the converts to this new doctrine; the enemies and opposers of it; and the infidels, who quietly looked on, and enjoyed the sport.

A new religion, or any thing novel or peculiar in the promulgation or revival of a religion, whatever may be it's antiquity, is always productive of some commotion. Whether it was, that the tenets of methodism were too strict for the public taste; whether their discourses were regarded as fatires upon mankind; or whether both these considerations concurred with the aversion men naturally feel to inroad and innovation on established customs, we pretend not to determine.

Whatever was the cause, the effect was infamous. It was persecution in all it's forms ; so far at least as persecution can be carried in a protestant country. It differed from the popish persecutions in one only circumstance : it was not warranted by government : It was not a persecution by authority. But it afforded a melancholy proof, that protestants can be almost as cruel as the catholics themselves : and that whatever may be the more liberal temper of the candid and enlightened of mankind, the mob of all countries and of all religions is but too much the same.

As Mr Wesley was at the head of the sect, the public attention was principally directed to him. To render him obnoxious to government, the fools or knaves of the day, who complimented administration, by supposing them as crazy and as

savage as themselves, took it into their heads to believe, or affect to believe, that he was an agent for the Pretender; not an Englishman, as he insisted, but a Frenchman and a Jesuit; who, from the opinion entertained of his superior talents, was employed by a neighbouring court, to pave the way for the Chevalier: and his converts were accused of popery and sedition. Almost in the same breath, and with a consistency, by which the great vulgar and the small has been eminently distinguished, they suddenly deposed him from his dignity. It was confidently reported, and as stupidly believed, that he had been fined for selling gin contrary to the statute; and, in a little time, this disturber of nations, this subverter of monarchies, was degraded into an idiot, a driveller, an illiterate enthusiast!

The manner in which he was taken to task by several of his literary antagonists, does little honour either to their heads or their hearts. Most of them, if we may judge from their management of that controversy, were weak and contemptible writers ; and undertook to refute a man, who certainly was learned and ingenious, without giving themselves the trouble to understand his doctrines. The consequence was, that their deficiency in argument, was supplied by invective. With dispositions worthy of inquisitors, they studied, by slander and defamation, to inflame against him the resentments of the populace. Many of the magistrates copied their example. By refusing to take informations and to grant warrants, they encouraged the brutality of the rioters. Not content with denying the justice they had sworn to

administer, they were repeatedly guilty of an avowal of their satisfaction in the enormities of the mob.

The most furious riots were in Cornwall, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, and Cork. Mr Eggington, the minister of Wednesbury, Mr Lane, of Bentley Hall, Mr Persehouse, of Walsal, and Mr Crone, the mayor of Cork, are particularly distinguished by Mr Wesley for the implacability of their zeal. To their encouragement it is principally ascribed, that such outrages were committed, as are a scandal to the christian name. The last of these told the mob in plain terms, that they might treat the methodists as they pleased, provided they did not kill them. This he seems to have suspected was not strictly legal!

The tameness of Mr Wesley's friends, who had imbibed that silliest of all prin-

ciples, the doctrine of non-resistance, increased the confidence of their adversaries, and exposed them to injuries, which resistance would have prevented. This however was not without exceptions. We know some, who made it a point to resist the mob wherever they found them; and they did so with great success. The rabble are for the most part as pusillanimous as they are cruel; and there have been many instances of a dozen resolute men driving two or three hundred of these ruffians before them, like a flock of sheep. Had they always acted in this manner, which, when the magistrates refused them justice, they certainly ought to have done, in a little time, not a man would have dared to disturb them. Unfortunately, this spirit was confined to a few: and non-resistance was a miserable expedient for disarming their

persecutors. The less they were opposed, the more insolent they became. The methodists were in frequent danger of their lives. Men, women with child, and even children were knocked down and abused with the same savage, undistinguishing fury. Houses were stripped of their furniture, vast quantities of goods carried off, feather-beds cut in pieces, and strewed over the streets; and, at the instigation of a wealthy villain, who headed a mob for that purpose, one preaching-house was pulled down to the ground. Several reputable people were forced into the army. One in particular, a worthy and innocent man, was dragged away from his family, and marched to Newcastle upon Tyne. Through abuse and fatigue, he fell ill of a fever. Being sent to the hospital, he was let blood; his arm mortified, and was cut off;

and in two or three days he died.

Who, that deserves the name of a man, can suppress his indignation, when he reflects, that there is even a possibility of committing such barbarities ; and that they have been submitted to in the eighteenth century, and in a land that boasts (in many respects, justly boasts) it's liberties, and looks down with conscious dignity on every other ? But what is liberty, if it be not equal ? Or who will say, that this country is free, while the most useful people it contains are still subject to the most egregious tyranny, and a despot, in the commission of the peace, has it at any time in his power, to satiate his resentment against a poor man, by sending him to the fleet or the army ?

Of the conduct of the magistrates who encouraged these enormities, it is impossible to speak in equal terms of se-

verity and indignation. Deeply is it to be regretted, that such execrable wretches should have been obtruded on the magistracy, and that a trust, so important to the public tranquillity, was delegated to the impotent or despotic hands of men, either shamefully ignorant of the laws of their country, and the first principles of natural justice; or what is still worse, inhuman enough deliberately to break through them, and let loose a fierce banditti on the persons and property of their fellow subjects. A magistrate, who acquits himself with ability and impartiality, is a respectable and useful character; but if the reverse; if deficient either in knowledge or integrity, one or both of which was certainly the case of those, of whom we are now speaking, his situation only renders that deficiency the more conspicuous. His advancement to

the magistracy is his disgrace ; and it happens to him, in common with many of the most flagitious, “ tollitur in altum, ut majore ruat casû.”

Mr Wesley, in “ perpetuam rei memoriam,” has recorded the names of several gentlemen of this stamp, but many more are omitted. Were they classed as they deserve, they would be ranked with the infamous band of inquisitors and assassins. Had we an accurate list, they should at least have figured in these pages as the enemies of mankind; the puny tyrants of their respective districts ; and, if this work lived, their descendants, to the remotest posterity should have learnt the infamy of their progenitors.

The first check that was given to the insolence of the mob, was, if we mistake not, in London. Sir John Ganson, one

of the Middlesex justices, waited on Mr Wesley, in the name of his brethren, with information, that they had orders from above, to do justice to him and his friends, whenever they should apply; his majesty being determined, that no man in his dominions should be persecuted for conscience sake. Posterity will scarcely believe, that, in Britain, and at so late a period as 1742, justice was not to be had, but by an order from court! That such an order was issued, reflects infinite credit on the sovereign who commanded it.

The royal mandate was by no means premature. It was become absolutely necessary that something should be done, to quell the increasing tumults. Of this necessity even the enemies of methodism were made sensible. In Staffordshire the mob turned upon their employers, and threatened, unless they gave them mo-

ney, to serve them as they had done the methodists! To such a pitch had their brutality arrived, that if they saw a stranger, whose appearance they disliked, they immediately attacked him. A quaker happening to ride through Wednesbury, they swore he was a preacher; pulled him off his horse, dragged him to a coal-pit, and were with difficulty prevented from throwing him in. But this gentleman, not so attached to his principles, as to refuse the protection of the laws, prosecuted them at the assizes; and, from that time, the tumults in Staffordshire subsided.

After several years of injury and ill-treatment, their patience exhausted by oppression, and their resolution increased by some successful trials, they began, in every part of the nation, to be more peremptory in demanding redress. If they

were disappointed at the quarter sessions, which was frequently the case, they traversed and appealed to the upper courts. At the assizes they were often, at the King's Bench, almost constantly successful. The miscreant, who has been taken notice of, as having headed a mob, to pull down a preaching-house in Lincolnshire, was possessed of considerable property. To avoid the exaltation he deserved, he had made off for the continent, leaving instructions with his agent, to compromise with the plaintiffs as well as he could. They were more lenient than he had reason to expect. The house was rebuilt at his expence; and he was too fortunate in saving his neck. Some other examples were not without their effect. It was understood by degrees, that the methodists had a right to equal liberty with the rest of their fellow subjects, and

were determined to assert it. They were permitted, we regret to say it, not without extreme reluctance on the part of many, who ought to have known better, to worship God in their own way : and at length, after infinite struggles, found peace in all their borders.

This subject has been treated by protestant, and even clerical writers, with an air of gaiety and satisfaction, which we beg leave to say, is a sufficient intimation of their own malignity. What so much pleases them in others, they would doubtless have rejoiced to help forward in person. Let them enjoy themselves in their own way : and let those, who admire it, follow their example. It is a species of complaisance we feel no disposition to imitate ; nor will we solicit any man's indulgence for having treated this despicable business with a warmth we wished

not to restrain; which we never will restrain, on similar occasions; and which, having imbibed from infancy the most cordial abhorrence of tyranny and tyrants, from the lowest retainer to authority, to the sceptered majesty of kings, we deem ever commendable, in the relation of such nefarious acts of cruelty and oppression*.

There is indeed a sort of excuse, and it is the only excuse that can be made for the gentlemen, who encouraged these proceedings. Some of the weaker methodists were certainly guilty of improprieties. Their ignorant bluntness, their rude reproofs and indiscriminate censures, with the inexcusable freedom with which they dealt “damnation round the

* Whoever wishes for more accurate information, is referred to an account of the riots at Wednesbury, published by Mr Wesley.

land," were not likely to be well received. Mr Wesley instances in one person, who had so provoked the minister of Wednesbury, that "his former love was turned into hatred;" and owns that similar imprudences had been productive in other places of similar persecution. But this, though it may be a palliation, is no defence of so horrid an evil. If these people were in the wrong, it was the duty of their more enlightened neighbours to convince them by reason; or if that were impracticable, to leave them to time and reflection. Extravagance is not often of long duration. If the methodists were mistaken in some of their opinions, they certainly, as a body, were equally remote from immorality and sedition: and as no people on earth interfered less with politics, neither the public nor individuals could have any thing to

fear from them. If there was a degree of wildness and enthusiasm in their discourses, which was more prevalent in the beginning than it is now, there were other ways of proceeding, than by persecution. Argument, perhaps a little dashed with ridicule, is not only a more christian, but a more effectual mode of conversion than fire and faggot: and he who first thought of dragooning men into orthodoxy, was as ignorant of human nature as of christianity. Had he been capable of reflection, it must have taught him better.

“ By force beasts act, and are by force restrain’d,
 The human mind by gentler means is gain’d;
 Thou can’st not take what I refuse to yield,
 Nor reap the harvest, though thou spoil’st the field.

PRIOR’S SOLOMON.

C H A P. II.

OF MRS WESLEY'S DEATH AND CHARACTER.
 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BROTHERS ON THE
 DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE.

MRS WESLEY, who, after the decease of her husband, seems to have divided her time among her children, died at London in 1742, aged about seventy years. The two brothers, with several of the family, were present on this melancholy occasion. She died as she had lived, not according to her son's expectation, in rapture and triumph, but what was quite as well, in great tranquillity. Mr John Wesley read the burial service, and preached the funeral sermon; giving another proof, how little he re-

garded the customs of the world. At the head of her grave was set a plain stone, with an epitaph in verse, and an inscription, intimating that she was the youngest and last surviving daughter of Dr Samuel Annesley.

Mr Badcock has observed of this lady, that she was a person “of most uncommon abilities and great goodness.” Could he have found words still more expressive of the most distinguished worth, he had no reason to fear excess in favour of this incomparable woman. Every thing we have heard concerning her, exhibits her in a point of view equally amiable and respectable. She was remarkable for the exact order of her domestic œconomy, and still more for the singular address with which she managed her children. Her chief attention was directed to an absolute subjection of their

will ; and this she attempted from the moment they were first capable of reflection.

Her account of the manner in which she conducted their education is particularly curious. “ None of them were taught to read till five years old, except Kezzy, in whose case I was over-ruled ; and she was more years in learning than many of the rest had been months. The way of teaching was this : The day before a child began to learn, the house was set in order, every one’s work appointed them, and a charge given, that none should come into the room from nine till twelve, or from two till five, which you know were our school hours. One day was allowed the child, wherein to learn it’s letters ; and each of them did in that time, know all it’s letters, great and small, except Molly and Nan-

cy, who were a day and a half before they knew them perfectly ; for which I then thought them dull ; but since I have observed how long many children are in learning the horn-book, I have changed my opinion. The reason why I thought them so then, was, because the rest learned so readily ; and your brother Samuel, who was the first child I ever taught, learnt the alphabet in a few hours. He was five years old on the 10th of February : the next day he began to learn, and as soon as he knew the letters, began at the first chapter of Genesis. He was taught to spell the first verse, then to read it over and over, till he could read it off hand, without any hesitation. So on to the second, till he took ten verses for a lesson, which he quickly did. Easter fell low that year, and by Whitsuntide he could read a chapter very well : for

he read continually, and had such a prodigious memory, that I cannot remember ever to have told him the same word twice. What was yet stranger, any word he had learnt in his lesson, he knew wherever he saw it, either in his Bible or any other book, by which means he learnt very soon to read an English author well.

“ The same method was observed with them all. As soon as they knew the letters, they were put first to spell and read one line; then a verse; never leaving till perfect in their lesson, were it shorter or longer. So one or other continued reading at school time, without any intermission; and before we left school, each child read what he had learnt that morning; and ere we parted in the afternoon, what they had learnt that day.

“ Every one was kept close to their business for the six hours of school. And it is almost incredible, what a child may be taught in a quarter of a year, by a vigorous application, if it have but a tolerable capacity, and good health. Every one of these, Kezzy excepted, could read better in three months, than most women can, as long as they live.”

The most remarkable circumstance in the character of this excellent lady is, that she, as well as her father and grandfather, her husband and three sons, was a teacher of mankind. During Mr Wesley's absence, not content with instructing and praying with her family, she read a sermon and the service of the church every Sunday with the neighbours ; and frequently directed the devotions of several hundred people. For farther information on this subject, the reader is re-

ferred to the Journal from 1741 to 1743, where he will find a letter, relating the occasion on which she first began, and the reasons of her perseverance in so extraordinary a conduct.

In the epitaph which he composed for her, Mr Wesley has intimated her acquiescence in his peculiar doctrines; or rather her experimental knowledge of their truth: while, on the other hand, an ingenious and learned writer, whom we have already mentioned as having given some account of the family, has observed, that Mrs Wesley lived long enough to “deplore the extravagance of her sons.” That at one time she did so, is indisputable: and her opposition to their proceedings was excited by two considerations; an idea that they were making “innovations in the church,” and her disgust at the relations she had

heard, of assurances of the divine favour, communicated to their converts in “dreams and visions,” and a variety of extraordinary manifestations. In a letter now before us, she agrees with her son Samuel, that “it is not the method of providence, to use extraordinary means to bring about that, for which ordinary means are sufficient.” Hence she contends that “those dreams and visions” on which many laid so great a stress, were “not only vain and frivolous as to the matter of them, but also of dangerous consequence to the weaker sort of christians.” As a specimen of her mode of reasoning on this subject, and of her notions of the scriptural assurance of salvation, we select the following extract. “The very end for which they pretend these new revelations are sent, seems to me one of the best arguments against the truth of

them. As far as I can see, they plead, that these visions, &c. are given to assure some particular persons of their adoption and salvation. But this end is abundantly provided for in the holy scriptures, wherein the rules by which we must live here, and be judged hereafter, are so plainly laid down, that he “that runs may read.” ’Tis by these laws we should examine ourselves; and as this is the way of God’s appointment, we may hope for his direction and assistance in such examination. And if, upon a serious review of our state, we find that, in the tenor of our lives, we have, or do now sincerely desire and endeavour to perform the conditions of the gospel covenant, required on our part, then we may discern, that the Holy Spirit hath laid in our minds a good foundation of a strong, reasonable, and lively

hope of God's mercy through Christ. You have plainly proved, that the scripture examples, and that text in Joel*, which they urge in their defence, will not answer their purpose: so that they are unsupported by any authority, human or divine; and the credit of their relations must therefore depend on their own single affirmation; which surely will not weigh much with the sober and judicious part of mankind."

This letter, which is dated March, 1738-9, was written when Mr Whitfield was collecting in these kingdoms for the orphan house in Georgia, and takes notice of an interview with him on this occasion. He told Mrs Wesley, that "there never was greater need of itinerant preachers; that the clergy were

* Joel ii. 28.

asleep; that her sons took much pains to reconcile dissenters to the communion of the church of England; and that Mr John Wesley had baptized five adult presbyterians in one day." She conceived, from this interview, a favourable opinion of Mr Whitfield, and says, "he seems a very good man, and one who truly desires the salvation of mankind. God grant, that the wisdom of the serpent may be joined to the innocence of the dove!"

Her son Samuel thought less favourably of this gentleman, and was more vigorous in his opposition to his brothers. He intimates in his letters, that it was in vain for Mr Whitfield "to pretend that he was of the church of England, unless there were two; one subordinate, the other opposite to the present ecclesiastical establishment and authority: one

within doors, the other without." And he remarks, that, with all his "professions of regard for the liturgy, he never once read it to his tatterdemallions on a common." The institution of the methodistic œconomy, he regarded as a schism actually formed; and their extemporary discourses and expositions, as "inlets to all false doctrine, heresy, and schism." Of the "bands of society," he says, they were such a snare, as he was unwilling to believe, "even of Whitfield's wrongheadedness." He asks, whether "any man of sense or spirit will suffer a domestic to be engaged to relate every thing, without reserve, to five or ten people, that concerns the person's conscience, how much soever it may concern the family; and particularly insists, that "no married persons ought to be

there, unless husband and wife be together.”

Exclusive of his aversion to every thing that bordered upon enthusiasm, Mr Wesley received an additional impulse from a letter addressed to him, in the name of a Mr Orchard of Stoke Abbey, whom we suppose to have been a clergyman. It is dated May 1739, and enumerates a variety of opinions, which he ascribes to Mr Wesley and his followers. His professed design in this letter was, to stimulate his correspondent to combat a system, which he considered as equally dangerous and unfounded : and this he supposed might be attempted with the best prospect of success by a “a brother of the dear but deluded man.”

He urges him to the undertaking, by representing the great good he might do by this means to the cause “of pure re-

ligion and true christianity," and the acknowledged ability of his brother, should he propagate such notions, "to inform, or rather, to infect others."

The "dangerous and extravagant tenets," to which he alludes, are, "that the mode of education, the order and distinctions, the degrees, and even robes and habits of the university, are antichristian; that nothing is taught in it, but that wisdom and learning, which opposes the power of God; that he who is born of God, is also taught of God, not in any limited sense, but so as to render the use of all natural means of no effect; that all human learning entirely disqualifies us for preaching the true gospel of Christ; that none have a right to preach, but such as are immediately called to it by the spirit of God; that an established ministry is a mere invention of men; that

our whole church, and all it's authority, is founded on, and supported by a lie; and that all who receive a power of preaching from it, are in a state of slavery and bondage, and must throw off all obedience to it, before they can enjoy the freedom of the gospel."

That many of Mr Wesley's converts did at that time speak in this extravagant manner, is more than probable. We have frequently heard from silly, enthusiastic people an assertion, and, in their way, a defence of each of these propositions; and every one knows, that learning and fanaticism have ever waged an inexpiable war. But a pretty general acquaintance with his opinions, authorizes us to say, that with most of these absurdities, Mr Wesley is not chargeable. Whatever might be the tendency of his system, he never was individually an

enemy to letters, nor to any branch of academic dignity and distinction. His friend Mr Law thought he carried his love of learning to an undue length; and, on this principle, was pointedly severe on what he called, his “babylonish address to the clergy.” Nor can we allow, that he considered “an established ministry as the mere invention of men; or the authority of the church of England as founded upon a lie.” On the contrary, he has always avowed himself a friend to the church, making use of her liturgy, and constantly regarding himself as one of her ministers. The validity of those pretensions will be considered hereafter. Perhaps the only charge in this catalogue, that properly belongs to him, is that which represents him as asserting, that “none have a right to preach, but such as are immediately

called to it by the spirit of God." This was certainly one of his principles; and we believe, it is the uniform and invariable opinion of his people. His notion was, that the call to the ministry is twofold; the external and the internal; the human and the divine. In the former he included early designation for the ministry, academic education, and episcopal ordination. By the latter he understood, a particular desire to be useful to mankind, accompanied by an inward persuasion of a divine appointment to the ministerial office.

It is remarkable, that the writer of this letter, in his recapitulation of the supposed errors of Mr Wesley, takes no notice of the doctrine of the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit, which was certainly, at that time, his most distinguishing doctrine. But his brother Samuel

did not forget it, and in almost all his letters, bent his whole strength to the demolition of it. Mr Wesley's position, which we give in his own words, is as follows: "The gospel promises, to all that are obedient to the divine call, the witness of God's spirit with their spirit, that they are the children of God. I am one of many witnesses of this matter of fact; that God does now make good this his promise daily; very frequently, during a representation (how made I know not, but not to the outward eye) of Christ, either hanging on the cross, or standing on the right hand of God: and this I know to be of God, because from that hour the person so affected is a new creature, both as to his inward tempers and outward life. Old things are past away; and all things are become new." To prove this, he cites several instances of

persons, two of them great enemies to the doctrine in question, who suddenly dropt down in inexpressible agonies, and in a little time rose up again, full of peace and joy.

Of his brother's mode of reasoning against this doctrine, we give the following additional specimen: "I argue against assurance (in your, or in any sense) as part of the gospel covenant, because many are saved without it. You own, you cannot deny exempt cases, which is giving up the dispute. You say, 'the cross is strongly represented to the eye of the mind! Do those words signify, in plain English, to the fancy? Inward eyes, ears, and feelings are nothing to other people. I am heartily sorry, such alloy should be found in so much piety. May we judge of the tree by it's fruits? Such visions, I think, may be fairly deemed fallacious,

only for being attended with a ridiculous effect.

“ You yourself doubted at first, and examined about the extacies. The matter is therefore not as plain as ‘ motion to a man walking.’” But I have my own reason, as well as you your own authority against the exceeding clearness of the divine interposition there. Your followers ‘ fall into agonies.’ I confess it. ‘ They are freed from pain, after you have prayed over them.’ Granted. They say, ‘ it is God’s doing.’ Dear brother, where is your ocular demonstration? Where indeed is the rational proof? Their living well afterwards may be a probable and sufficient argument that they believe themselves; but it goes no further.

“ I must ask a few more questions. Did these agitations ever begin during

the use of any of the collects of the church? Or during the preaching of any sermon, that had been before preached within consecrated walls, without that effect? Or during the inculcating any other doctrine, besides that of your new birth? Were the main body of these agents or patients good sort of people before hand, or loose and immoral?"

In another letter, on the same subject, he says, "I have many remarks to make on your letter; but do not care to fight in the dark, or run my head against a stone-wall. You need fear no controversy with me, unless you hold it worth while to remove these three doubts: first, whether will you own or disown in terms, the necessity of a sensible information from God of pardon? If you disown it, the matter is over, as to you. If you own it, then, secondly, whether

you will not think me distracted, to oppose you, with “the most infallible of all proofs,” inward feeling in yourself, and positive evidence in your friends, while I myself produce neither? Thirdly, whether you will release me from the horns of your dilemma, that I must “either talk without knowledge, like a fool; or against it, like a knave?” I conceive neither part strikes. For a man may reasonably argue against what he never felt; and may honestly deny what he has felt to be necessary to others. “I am not out of my way, though encountering windmills.”

Such were the debates on a subject, in which the parties, though from opposite principles, were deeply interested. Samuel was the more in earnest, because he had no doubt, that to convince his brother, was to destroy heresy in the

bad ; while the latter was equally tenacious of his system, from a persuasion, that the cause he vindicated was that of genuine christianity. From this view of the controversy, the reader will find little difficulty in forming his conclusions. That the advocates for the direct witness will not be convinced by the objector's arguments, we can easily believe ; but they must at least own, that they are sensible and ingenious : and some will think them conclusive.

This gentleman, independent of his dislike to his brother's principles, found another cause of disapprobation, in his fears for his health. Mr John Wesley had entertained an idea, that he had not long to live. His brother intreats him to let him know his reasons for such a supposition ; and adds, “ I should be very angry with you, if you cared for it,

Should you have broken your iron constitution already, as I was with the glorious Pascal, for losing his health, and living almost twenty years in pain.”

In this place we may take notice of Mr Wesley's subsequent account of his mother and brother. In answer to Mr Badcock's observation, that “she lived long enough to deplore the extravagance of her sons,” he says, “by vile misrepresentations she was deceived for a time. But she no sooner heard them speak for themselves, than she was thoroughly convinced, they were in no delusion, but spoke “the words of truth and soberness.” She afterwards lived with me several years, and died rejoicing and praising God.” To the same purpose is a passage in the Journals, in which Mr Wesley says, that both his mother and brother were at length of the same judgment with

himself. “ On Monday, September 3d, 1739, I talked largely with my mother, who told me, that till a short time since, she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned as the * having forgiveness of sins now, or having God’s spirit to bear witness with our spirit : much less did she imagine that this was the common privilege of all believers. Therefore, said she, “ I never durst ask it for myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall was pronouncing these words, in delivering the cup to me, ‘ the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee,’ the words struck through my heart, and I knew God, for Christ’s sake, had forgiven me all my sins.”

I asked, whether her father, Dr Annesley had not the same faith ; and whe-

* This is not expressed with his usual propriety.

ther she had not heard him preach it to others. She answered, he had it himself, and declared, a little before his death, that, for more than forty years, he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all of his being ‘accepted in the beloved;’ but that nevertheless, she did not remember to have heard him preach, no, not once explicitly upon it: whence she supposed, he also looked upon it as the peculiar blessing of a few, not as promised, to all the people of God.”

Nearly similar is his account of his brother Samuel. “On Wednesday, the 23d, we came to Tiverton. My poor sister was sorrowing, almost as one without hope. Yet we could not but rejoice at hearing, from one who had attended my brother in all his weakness, that several days before he went hence, God had given him a calm and full assurance

of his interest in Christ. Oh! may every one, who opposes it, be thus convinced, that this doctrine is of God!" On this information he immediately puts a construction favourable to his own idea of the doctrine of assurance. But perhaps he advances too suddenly to the conclusion. Mrs Wesley's confidence in the divine mercy, from a particular impression of those words in the communion service, does not necessarily suppose a direct revelation. Nor is it easy to prove such a revelation to be in any case necessary; much less in that of such excellent persons as Dr Annesley and Mr Samuel Wesley. Piety so unequivocal as theirs might derive, both from scripture and reason, an assurance of salvation amply sufficient to every purpose of life, without any such interposition; and it is reasonable to conclude, that this alone was the

they professed : for Mrs Wesley, notwithstanding their former disputes on this subject, does not appear, till interrogated by her son, to have construed any thing she had observed in Dr Annesley, into a profession of this doctrine. The probability seems to be, that she recollected some expressions of the Doctor, which were significant, not of that direct certainty for which her son contended, and which he supposed to be communicated by an immediate testimony of the Holy Spirit, but of his “lively hope” in the divine mercy. It is not unlikely, that, during the long confinement of Mr Samuel Wesley in his last illness, something similar might have fallen from him, which his brother would naturally accommodate to his own system. This is at least the most probable supposition ; nor does there appear any authority for

supposing, that he became a convert to the doctrine of the direct witness, or that his sentiments, in this instance, had ever suffered the smallest alteration.

It would be little consistent with the duty we owe the public, were we to dismiss this subject without some reflections. If enthusiasm be an evil less dangerous than impiety, it is yet an evil. Religion has no necessary connexion with superstition: and it greatly becomes us to guard against it. In enquiries into the conduct of reformers, whether real or pretended, the first question is public utility. This is a praise which cannot be denied to Mr Wesley and his associates. Their earliest essays in the itinerant field were certainly attended with the spirit of reformation: and as their zeal was of no common character, their success was in proportion. In this view, too much

cannot be said in their behalf: and whoever shall take the trouble to explore the proper sources of information, will find that they have been singularly successful in reclaiming multitudes of the most dissolute characters in the nation. It is therefore with the greater reluctance, that we find ourselves obliged to censure, where in other respects so much praise is due. But it is necessary to separate the chaff from the wheat. Such were the confusion, the ravings, the extacies, by which their ministry was distinguished, that they ought to be noticed. They force themselves on our attention. They provoke enquiry; and to examine is to condemn them.

What less then can be said of them, than that they were absurd, extravagant, and antichristian? The ministry of the apostles was not marked by such an in-

fluence. The discourses of Luther and Calvin, and the rest of that illustrious band, who, in this island or the continent, were most instrumental in promoting the reformation, were not disgraced by such extravagancies. It is remarkable too, that they were regarded by several of the first methodists with a jealous eye. Of this number was Mr Whitefield, who at first was by no means satisfied concerning them, nor considered them as the result of a divine influence. Even Mr Wesley has acknowledged that in some instances they were spurious. But he goes farther than most people will be disposed to go with him; and supposes, that they were sometimes produced by a diabolic agency, and with the express purpose of casting an odium on the work in which he was engaged. The probable presumption is, that in most instances

they were purely natural ; the mere mechanical effects of extraordinary sentiments, delivered in a most singular and extraordinary manner. The fair face of truth was frequently deformed by extravagance and excess. Nothing can be more decidedly incompatible, than the mild accents of the gospel, and what has often been advanced under that name, by many of it's professors : and though not acquainted with any of the primitive methodists, the Mr Weseleys excepted, we have heard discourses, in which hell and damnation has been denounced with such frantic declamation, and in a stile so horribly sulphureous, that our astonishment could scarcely have been excited by any consequences that might have ensued. In men of sense and learning, such exhibitions will seldom produce other sensations, than pity or contempt : but

their effects on weaker minds are inconceivable.

The following letter to Mr Wesley, written in 1739, by Mr Cennick, who left him, on account of a difference in opinion, and afterwards joined the moravians, is selected as a specimen: “ On Monday evening, I was preaching at the school on the forgiveness of sins, when two persons, who the night before, had laughed at others, cried out with a loud and bitter cry. So did many more, in a little time. Indeed, it seemed that the devil, and much of the powers of darkness were come among us. My mouth was stopped, and my ears heard scarce any thing, but such terrifying cries, as would have made any one’s knees tremble. Only judge. It was pitch dark; it rained much; and the wind blew vehemently. Large flashes of lightning,

and loud claps of thunder, mixt with the screams of frightened parents, and the exclamations of nine distressed souls! The hurry and confusion caused hereby, cannot be expressed. The whole place seemed to me to resemble nothing but the habitation of apostate spirits; many raving up and down, crying, “the devil will have me! I am his servant! I am damned! My sins can never be pardoned! I am gone for ever!” A young man, in such horrors, that seven or eight could not hold him, still roaring like a dragon, “ten thousand devils, millions, millions of devils are about me!” This continued three hours. One cried out, “that fearful thunder is raised by the devil: in this storm he will bear me to hell.” Some cried out with a hollow voice, “Mr Cennick! bring Mr Cennick.” I came to all that desired me. They then spurned with

all their strength, grinding their teeth, and expressing all the fury that heart can conceive. Indeed, their staring eyes and swelling faces, so amazed others, that they cried out almost as loud, as they that were tormented. I have visited several since, who told me their senses were taken away ; but when I drew near, they said they felt fresh rage, longing to tear me to pieces."

It is worth remarking, not without some surprise at his simplicity in the relation, that Mr Wesley describes nearly similar effects from the publication of his most favourite doctrine, perfection ; and tells the world, that "the sudden and violent emotions of mind, whether of fear or sorrow, of desire or joy, affected the whole frame ; insomuch, that many trembled exceedingly ; many fell to the ground ; many were violently convulsed,

perhaps all over ; and many seemed to be in the agonies of death. And the far greater part, however otherwise affected, cried with a loud and bitter cry. So that, upon the whole, we may affirm, such a work of God as this has not been seen before in the three kingdoms.”

This is not improbable. Such a work, in all it's circumstances, is not to be expected every day. But whatever becomes of the rest, agonies and convulsions are no symptoms of it's divinity. Reason will be cautious in ascribing them to such an agency. They are more properly traced to ignorance and imbecility: which is evident, as well from the character of the subjects of them, as from the present scarcity of such phenomena. The followers of Mr Wesley, in the same proportion that they have increased in knowledge, have decreased in

enthusiasm. At present, no one drops to the ground under their discourses. We are now seldom shocked with hearing of the “blood of Christ running down men’s arms or throats, or poured like warm water on their breast or heart; of their feeling as if run through with a sword, or pressed with a great weight, or choaking, or as if their whole inside was ready to be torn in pieces:” and not often with the strange indecency of shouting in the time of divine service, or clapping the preacher’s back, “for mere satisfaction and joy of heart.” In a word, rant and nonsense, possessions and exorcisms, with the whole train of modern miracles, are certainly much less frequent than they were; and though not absolutely fled away, are gradually retiring before the manly decencies of rational and scriptural religion. This is

another confirmation of the opinion of almost every judicious observer, that these were tares that sprung up among the good seed; and every rational christian will concur with Mr Samuel Wesley in lamenting, that so base an alloy should be mingled with so much piety.

It has been said that the agitations so frequently and so justly censured, were sometimes artificial. A parallel case, which we know to be authentic, affords more than a presumption that they were so. In a certain district in the north of Ireland, several congregations had adopted a custom, like the jumpers in Wales, of rocking from side to side in the time of preaching, and when they grew warm, of leaping and shouting, till they might be heard to the distance of a mile. One of their preachers resolved to abolish so stupid a practice. The first or second

time of his officiating in that neighbourhood, scarcely had he entered upon his discourse, when they began to shout. He immediately made a pause, and told his audience that he had always understood the intention of the ministry to be the instruction of the hearers; that they could not possibly be instructed by what they could not hear, and that as it was not to be supposed he could out-lung them all, he would wait till they had done. As the hint was pretty broad, they comprehended it. Their vociferations ceasing, he resumed his subject: and it is hoped that itinerancy has never since been disgraced by these noisy accompaniments. This sublime act of devotion they called rejoicing. The propriety of it they inferred from a verse in the Psalms, "rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous," and from a passage in one of the prophets,

where in the figurative language of prophecy, the trees of the forest are represented as “clapping their hands!

To an impartial observer, it will appear not a little extraordinary, that Mr Wesley, who could censure the phrenzies of the Welsh enthusiasts, should be so short sighted with regard to similar extravagancies among his own people; many of whom were as wild as the most fanatic of the former. Giving an account of these excesses, he informs us that at one of their public meetings, “some of them leaped up many times, men and women, several feet from the ground. They clapped their hands with the utmost violence; they shook their heads; they distorted all their features; they threw their arms and legs to and fro, in all variety of postures. They sung, roared, shouted, screamed with all their

might ; to the no small terror of those that were near them. One gentlewoman told me, she had not been herself since, and did not know when she should. Mean time, the person of the house was delighted above measure, and said “now the power of God is come indeed.”

It is a serious objection to these “signs and wonders,” that they are unnecessary. Not a single good purpose are they calculated to answer. As this objection seemed to carry some force, Mr Wesley has undertaken to answer it, by assigning the reasons why he supposed them to have been permitted. “Perhaps, says he, it might be because of the hardness of our hearts, unready to receive any thing, unless we see it with our eyes, and hear it with our ears, that God, in tender condescension to our weakness, suffered so many outward signs of the very

time when he wrought this inward change, to be continually seen and heard among us. But although they saw “signs and wonders,” for so I must term them, yet many would not believe. They could not indeed deny the facts; but they could explain them away. Some said, “these were formerly natural effects; the people fainted away only because of the heat and closeness of the rooms.” Others were sure, “it was all a cheat. They might help it, if they would. Else, why were these things only in their private societies? Why were they not done in the face of the sun?” To day our Lord answered for himself. For, while I was enforcing, “be still, and know that I am God,” he began to make bare his arm, not in a close room, neither in private, but in the open air, and before more than two thousand witnesses. One and another

and an other were struck to the earth, exceedingly trembling at the presence of his power. Others cried with a loud and bitter cry, “ what must we do to be saved ?” And in less than an hour, seven persons, wholly unknown to me, till that time, were rejoicing and singing, and, with all their might, giving thanks to the God of their salvation.”

That the symptoms attending these conversions were not natural, but produced by a divine agency, he infers from the purity of their subsequent conduct ; as we may learn from his observations in a letter to his brother. “ That such a change was then wrought, appears from the whole tenor of their life, till then many ways wicked ; from that time, holy, just, and good. I will shew you him that was a lion till then, and is now a lamb ; him that was a drunkard, and is

now exemplarily sober; the whoremonger that was, who now abhors the very garments spotted by the flesh. These are my living arguments for what I assert, that God does now, as aforetime, give remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost to us and our children: yea, and that always suddenly, as far as I have known, and often in dreams and in the visions of God."

This mode of reasoning may possibly find casuists, who will deem it conclusive. To us it does not carry conviction. The subsequent deportment of these converts may indeed establish their sincerity. It may prove, that they believed themselves, and were persuaded of the truth of their assertions, that all this was the effect of a divine influence; but it is no proof they were not deceived. Mr Wesley says, that these things which gave so much

offence, happened by the divine direction, in order, that the conversions of his hearers, being so remarkably distinguished by the circumstances which attended them, the public might be induced to acknowledge the finger of God. But how is this possible? Can any man suppose, that the Almighty would suffer his operations to be debased by such effects? Effects highly ridiculous in themselves; and therefore calculated, not to answer the purpose of producing credit to the mission of the preachers, but to destroy that credit, by prepossessing the public against them and their ministrations.

That this was the general tendency of these extravagancies, is too obvious to be disputed : and it is easy to conceive, that the idea of a divine influence exerting itself in so singular a manner, can never be reconciled with the inconsist-

ency of supposing him to countenance any thing that shall defeat his purposes, by raising prejudices against a work, which is considered as his own. It is readily granted, that these preachers were useful. But they were so, not because of these extravagancies, but in spite of them. And we are under no fear of incurring the guilt of impiety, by considering them as blots and deformities, and a terrible discredit to the whole undertaking. If the Almighty has any work to accomplish in the world, he can surely conduct it without such auxiliaries. That he has ever deigned to employ them, it is not easy to believe.

It is a little extraordinary, that this whole business is directly contrary to Mr Wesley's remarks, on another occasion, when from that expression of our Saviour, "the kingdom of God cometh not

by observation," he says, "surely any one may perceive a conqueror rushing through a nation, at the head of fifty or sixty thousand men!" And he thence justly concludes, that the noisy, turbulent zeal of Mahomet and other impostors, could in fact have nothing to do with religion. The remark may be retorted. The extravagancies which attended the early ministrations of Mr Wesley and his brethren, are as much open to common observation, as the marches and slaughters, the ravages and desolations of those military apostles; and if there be any truth in analogy, or any justness in Mr Wesley's reasoning, it may be presumed, on his own principles, that these things were antichristian.

As the animadversions of Mr Samuel Wesley have been noticed, it will not be improper to present our readers with the

sentiments of another of the family. This gentleman, whose name was Whitelamb, was a pupil of Mr Wesley's at Oxford, and married one of his sisters. He had been particularly obliged by the kindness and generosity of his tutor; which he did not fail gratefully to acknowledge. But he could never embrace his religious opinions. And from several letters, written in the infancy of methodism, it appears, that he was strangely affected by his language and behaviour. The following is a striking picture of his feelings, on hearing Mr Wesley preach at Epworth, on his father's tomb-stone, and of his views of methodism in general. Mr Wesley had preached in the church-yard, because the curate, who was under the greatest obligations to the family, had refused him the use of the church, and repelled him from the communion. This

letter is dated June 11. 1742. We give it as it stands in the Arminian Magazine.

“ DEAR BROTHER,

“ I saw you at Epworth, on Tuesday evening. Fain would I have spoken to you, but that I am quite at a loss how to address or behave. Your way of thinking is so extraordinary, that your presence creates an awe, as if you were an inhabitant of another world.

“ God grant you and your followers may always have entire liberty of conscience. Will you not allow others the same? Indeed, I cannot think as you do, any more than I can help honouring and loving you.

“ Dear Sir, will you credit me? I retain the highest veneration and affection for you. The sight of you moves me strangely. My heart overflows with gra-

itude. I feel, in a higher degree, all that tenderness and yearning of bowels, with which I am affected toward every branch of Mr Wesley's family. I cannot refrain from tears, when I reflect, this is the man who at Oxford was more than a father to me. This is he, whom I have there heard expound or dispute publicly, or preach at St. Mary's, with such applause: and oh! that I should ever add, whom I have lately heard preach at Epworth!

“ Dear Sir, is it in my power to serve or oblige you in any way? Glad I should be, that you would make use of me. God open all our eyes, and lead us into truth, whatever it be!”

This letter was followed, in September, by another to Mr Charles Wesley, from which we learn, that his old tutor

having demanded his pulpit, Mr White-lamb was much concerned at the offence he had given by acceding to the demand. On this occasion he again intimates his disapprobation of their sentiments in very remarkable terms. “To be frank, I cannot but look upon your doctrines as of ill consequence; consequence, I say; for take them nakedly in themselves, and nothing seems more innocent, nay good and holy. Suppose we grant, that in you and the rest of the leaders, who are men of sense and discernment, what is called the seal and testimony of the spirit is something real: yet I have great reason to think, that, in the generality of your followers, it is merely the effect of a heated fancy.”

It is said, that this gentleman, during his residence at Oxford, was of a serious character and exemplary deportment:

but Mr Wesley undertakes to invalidate his testimony by observing, it was no wonder he thought as he did ; because, “ at that time, and for some years after, he did not believe the christian revelation ! ”

C H A P. III.

PROGRESS OF METHODISM.

AMONG the early theatres of Mr Wesley's ministrations, we have particularly distinguished Newcastle upon Tyne. In this part of the vineyard, where he resided several months, he was eminently successful. He always regarded it with singular affection; and has frequently said, that was he to confine himself to one spot, it should be this.

It has been observed, that many of the converts of Mr Whitefield were from among the rich. Mr Wesley's success lay chiefly among the poor. The same remark is made by himself. "Our Lord

gives us the poor, wherever we go. They are our perquisite. Such a loving, dirty company you never saw with your eyes*. But by and by they shall be white as snow." One reason that has been assigned for this difference, is taken from the superior strictness of Mr Wesley's discipline. It is generally understood, that in Mr Whitefield's plan there was less austerity and restraint. Perhaps another reason was, that he was a more popular preacher. The crowds that attended his discourses were innumerable: and several persons of distinction embracing his system, it is no wonder if many opulent people followed their example.

It has been already intimated, that the bias of education had early impressed Mr Wesley (and the principle was much

* The colliers in the neighbourhood of Newcastle.

more powerful and uniform in his brother Charles) with a strong predilection for the clergy ; which would naturally induce him to wish for assistants in holy orders. It was from this principle, and perhaps too from their former intimacy at Oxford, that he took some pains to cement the union between Mr Whitefield and himself. Had they harmonized in opinion, a coalition might have taken place ; but with their views, it was impossible. The former was an advocate for particular, the latter for universal redemption ; the one a staunch predestinarian, the other as resolute an arminian : and such was the effect of this distinction, that they resolved finally to separate ; their converts mutually dividing under their respective leaders.

The first intimation of this is in the second journal. “ A private letter, wrote

to me by Mr Whitefield, having been printed without either his leave or mine, great numbers of copies were given to our people, both at the door and in the foundery itself. Having procured one of them, I related, after preaching, the naked fact to the congregation, and told them, I will do just what I believe Mr Whitefield would, were he here himself. Upon which I tore it in pieces before them all. Every one, who had received it, did the same; so that in two minutes there was not a whole copy left. Ah! poor Ahithophel!

“ Ibi omnis effusus labor ! ”

What was the purport of this letter, we are not informed: but this sacrifice at the altar of peace could not detain the gentle goddess. The expedient, however ingenious, did not succeed. A truce proclaimed by only one of the parties,

was not likely to be of long duration ; and hostilities presently recommenced. He tells us, that, having heard much of Mr Whitefield's unkind behaviour since his return from Georgia, he went to hear what he had to say. The result was, that his old friend, who considered Mr Wesley and himself as preaching "two different gospels," was determined, not only not to give him the right hand of fellowship, but publicly to preach against him, wherever he preached at all. In a little time, his warmth in some measure subsided. They were once more on tolerable terms of intimacy and friendship, and mutually occupied each other's pulpits. But many of their followers were less moderate. Considering their extraordinary professions of religion, the zeal of neither party was so tolerant as it might have been ; and as the people ge-

nerally improve upon the dissensions of their leaders, their difference in opinion was productive of a reciprocal and general opposition. Some exceptions there certainly were. The wise and good of all parties will always reject the absurdities of their brethren. But as these are usually the smallest number, their moderate and prudent counsels are generally rejected by the majority, and themselves treated as lukewarm and pusillanimous, or treacherous and disaffected.

This separation was certainly not agreeable to Mr Wesley; though it seems to have been inevitable, as well on other accounts, as from their difference in principle. Even good men are not always exempt from the thirst of popular applause. Perhaps each grasped at the sceptre: and as the love of sway is in many instances congenial to the human

mind, it is not impossible, that the contention between them might be as much promoted by the charms of power, as by the love of truth :

“ Nec Cæsar ferre priorem,
 “ Pompeiusve parem potuit.”——

Though this contention might have a tendency to weaken, it does not appear to have eradicated in Mr Wesley his esteem for Mr Whitefield. He entertained the highest opinion of his character, and constantly spoke of him in terms infinitely more respectful, than of any other of his antagonists, especially his former friends, the moravians. These he treated with as little ceremony as they seem to have treated him, and alternately attacked them with the seriousness of argument and the poignancy of ridicule. An instance which he gives of the pulpit stile of one of the public brethren is curious;

who, addressing his hearers on the infancy of Christ, supposes that his mother might send him for a porringer of milk, which unfortunately breaking on the way, he might work a miracle to replace it! A stile equally simple and familiar! But whether this arose from the genius of the preacher, or from any amiable condescension to the capacity of his hearers, is not yet determined.

His opposition to the brethren has been ascribed to different causes. Some have imputed it to jealousy, and the pride of emulation; observing that “enthusiasm dislikes rivalry as much as any other species of human pride;” and have concluded, that the eagerness with which he pursued the *German Boar* *, proceeded solely from the dread of his success.

VOL. II.

G

* Count Zinzendorf.

This expression of his brother, which certainly is not the most polite, can scarcely be excused, except indeed upon the principle of poetic licence! One of his biographers supposes it to be applied to the Count, and to have been occasioned by the “little success with which they had hunted him.” Perhaps it was intended, not individually, but for the society at large; and the poet might deem it sufficiently authorized, from similar applications in the metaphorical phraseology of scripture. But we pretend not to defend such language. It is certainly too coarse for modern usage; and we observe, that Mr Wesley himself sometimes offends in this respect; and, forgetting his usual self command, breaks forth into a strain of violent invective against a class of religionists, whom he characterises as the “fierce, unclean,

brutish, blasphemous antinomians.” A style not the most genteel, and perhaps too harsh for any community, among whom there might be many individuals, whose practice was superior to their principles.

It is not improbable, that his zeal against the Count's followers might receive an additional impulse from their influence on his brother Hall, whom he considers, in a letter to his sister, as having been seduced by “those men, whose words are smoother than oil;” and of whom he indignantly adds, “they have blunderingly taught him to find fault even with my œconomy and outward management, both of my family and society. Whereas I know this is the peculiar talent which God has given me; wherein, by his grace, I am not behind the very chiefest of them.” But he has

assigned other reasons for his strictures; among which we distinguish the licentious tendency of some of the doctrines which many of them inculcated, and their servile obedience to their patron. Of the former, several specimens, which he has cited from their writings and their discourses, are miserable indeed: and many extracts have been made from their hymn books, which, for nonsense and ribaldry, are certainly without a parallel. The last of the charges he exhibits, however well founded, does not come quite so well from Mr Wesley. In this case,

“Clodius accusat mœchos, Catilina Cethegum!”

The noble religionist certainly felt all his consequence, and was passionately fond of power; but not more so than his antagonist. As no man was ever more enamoured of it than Mr Wesley,

nor ever contended for authority more absolute and unrestrained, one would think he might have treated his brother sovereign with a little more lenity, and have found some excuse at least for this “ glorious fault of angels and of gods.”

Among other reasons, it has been said, that he frequently drew his quill against the moravians and others, from a natural inclination for controversy, and a peculiar consciousness of his dexterity in debate. In early youth he was undoubtedly pleased with his polemical talents. Something of this he has intimated himself: “ When I was about twenty years old, my father said to me one day, young man, you are now full of logic and philosophy; and you will dispute with any man that contradicts you, about any thing or nothing. But take my word, if you live twenty years longer, you will

love controversy as little as I do." He adds, that at that time, which was in 1743, he found it so. It is but candid to acknowledge, that his disputes with the brethren might possibly have originated in better motives: nor is there any proof that they did not. We find him speaking of the Count in a letter to a friend, in a stile of solemnity, mixed with indignation, which seems to have taken it's rise from higher principles than vanity or emulation. "I have no desire, says he, to see Count Zinzendorf any more, till I see him before the judge of all, whose law I think he has despised, and cast his throne down to the ground." How different his address to Mr Whitefield! "Surely there shall be peace between me and thee, and between my people and thy people. But if Jezebel ask of me peace, I reply, what peace,

while thy witchcrafts and thy whoredoms are so many? Thou pervertest the right ways of the Lord. Thou stranglest all other children in the birth, and idolizest thine own. Thou prophesiest smooth things to the rich, bewitching them with thy syren song. Thou art departed from the Lord! Beware he do not finally depart from thee. I do therefore, and must interfere with the moravian plan, till I make peace with the world and the devil."

It may not be improper here to present our readers with an instance of his mode of reasoning on controverted points, at this early period. In a letter to a friend, he thus remarks on the doctrines taught by some of his brethren. "The love of God to all mankind, except those who finally cast away his offered mercy, I find so fully and strongly

revealed in scripture, that I cannot deny it, without denying all revelation: so strongly, that in very deed, I should as soon deny original sin, and turn Pelagian, yea Jew, Turk, or Pagan, as allow one soul to come into the world, whom God reprobated, or past by, from eternity.

“ I believe ‘ all men ’ means all men, and nothing less. All sorts of men, no more comes up to it’s meaning, than all sorts of stones. Saving grace is plainly grace, saving in it’s own nature, yet not irresistibly so. In which I can see no inconsistency at all. Neither would you, unless you had so associated the ideas of saving and irresistible grace. Hence, you can see no difference between saving, and necessarily or infallibly saving. My brother and I do believe, from the bottom of our hearts, that if all the errors

of popery, mahometanism, and paganism could be put into one, it would fall short both of the big absurdity and gross blasphemy of unconditional reprobation. I will neither take universal redemption, and universal salvation, nor leave both. I can see a way between them, if you cannot; which is, universal redemption, and conditional salvation. This I must believe, while I believe the Bible.”

From this quotation, a sufficient reason may be deduced, why a lasting union between Mr Wesley and Mr Whitefield must have been impracticable. The gulph between them was immense: and it unfortunately happened, that those extreme points, in which they differed, were considered by each as of the utmost importance, and classed with the principal doctrines of christianity. If absolute predestination was absurdity and

blasphemy, in the estimation of the former, the contrary doctrine would be regarded by him as equally amiable and important : and if, in the opinion of the latter, his own system was the true summary of christian doctrine, he could scarcely coalesce with a man who so decidedly opposed it.

The difference with Mr Whitefield seems to have given him more concern than any other that occurred. But he was not to be hurt in any great degree by any thing. His high conception of the work in which he was engaged, regarding it as the occasion of a reformation, which, beginning with the church, should extend through all orders of men, bore him up above every difficulty, and carried him through every opposition. “ My belief, says he, is, that the present design of God is, to visit the poor,

desolate church of England; and that therefore, neither poor deluded Mr Gambold, nor any who leave it, will prosper. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper, that love thee. Whoever is any enemy to the church of England, is an enemy to God; nor can such have any place with us!"

Mr Wesley was always remarked as a rigid disciplinarian; and had he taken a military turn, would certainly have been distinguished as a most punctilious martinet. A strict and circumstantial œconomy was congenial to his disposition. If it was a little complicated, so much the better; and it is not improbable that he might have learnt it, in some degree, from his father, who was a man of great regularity, and of whom he observes, that it was his custom to visit all his parishioners, sick or well, from house to

house ; to talk with them on the things of God, and observe severally the state of their souls. What he then observed, he minuted down in a book kept for that purpose, which he called his *Notitia Parochialis*. In this manner he went thro' his parish, which was near three miles long, three times. He was visiting it the fourth time round, when he fell into his last sickness. This example, which was certainly a good one, he strenuously recommended to his preachers, and as much as possible, observed himself. He much admired a saying of one of the ancients ; the “ soul and body make a man ; spirit and discipline a christian.” The maxim is doubtless just ; nor will any reasonable person object to discipline, as well in christian as in other societies, so far as it is useful and necessary. But of this in the sequel.

About the year 1743, he was engaged in building a meeting house, at Newcastle, a clumsy, ponderous pile, which was called the Orphan-house, though the designation, or at least the use to which it has been since put, bears no relation to it's name. During it's erection, which was defrayed like his other houses, by voluntary contribution, he was frequently at a loss for cash ; to provide which, was his office. “ In me, says he, *domus inclinata recumbit* ;” and he observes, that he must have been long ago at a full stop, were it not for the reputation of his great riches ; which however was a vulgar error.

Speaking of the difficulties he found in carrying his purpose of building, at Newcastle, into execution, he says, “ we can get no ground for love or money. I like this well. It is a good sign. If

the devil can hinder us, he shall." When this difficulty was removed, and the ground purchased, he was for some time as much at a loss to get possession : on which occasion he wrote the following, which is presented to the reader as being strongly characteristic of the writer, and a remarkable specimen of the laconic.

" Sir,

" I am surprized. You give it under your hand, that you will put me into possession of a piece of ground, specified in an article between us, in fifteen days time. Three months are passed, and that article is not fulfilled. And now you say, you can't conceive what I mean by troubling you. I mean to have that article fulfilled. I think my meaning is very plain. I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

In August 1744, he preached for the last time, before the University of Oxford. The freedom with which, in one of his sermons, he had charged that respectable body with a crime of no common size, giving general offence, it was determined by the Vice Chancellor and the heads of houses, to provide him a substitute at their own expence : which they continued to do, till his marriage, when he wrote them, in the apostolic stile, the following letter of resignation, dated June 1. 1751 : “ Ego Johannes Wesley, Collegii Lincolnienfis in Academia Oxonienfi socius, quicquid mihi juris est in prædictâ societate, ejusdem rectori et sociis sponte ac liberè resigno ; illis universis et singulis perpetuam pacem ac omnimodam in Christo felicitatem exoptans.” On the resolution of the university, he remarks, that he was well plea-

fed his difmiffion from the pulpit at St. Mary's fhould be on St. Bartholomew's day, the fame "on which, in the laft century, near two thoufand burning and fhining lights were put out at once." It was about this time, that his brother Hall was rapidly finking into antinomianifm, and imbibing thofe licentious principles, which impreffed fo fatal an influence on his fubfequent conduct.

An undertaking of no fmall magnitude, which he completed in 1748, and which certainly required a confiderable proportion of refolution and refource, was the institution of Kingfwood fchool. It's firft intention feems to have been in favour of the children of the colliers; but that fcheme was foon laid afide, and it was appropriated to the education of a certain number of the children of methodifts, who were to pay for their board,

and a proportion of the children of the travelling preachers, who were instructed gratis. The number at present is about sixty. Adjoining to the school, was a chapel, which his brother Samuel wished him to have consecrated, and subject to episcopal jurisdiction. But here, as usual, they differed; and with all his reverence for lawn sleeves, he chose rather to be the bishop himself.

The rules of the school, which are in print, discover a large mixture of singularity and good sense. The general plan of education is well calculated to give the pupils a good share of classical learning. Most of the classics, for obvious reasons, he extracted. He permitted no translation whatever; and his grammars, which are very concise, are in English. The order in which the higher books are read, is much the same as in other

schools ; but in the first class, instead of Cordery or Eutropius, he introduced a book of his own composition, entitled, *Prælectiones Pueriles*, and written in easy, yet not inelegant Latin. The second class read Kempis and Erasmus.

Pope's observation*, concerning forms of government, may be applied with great propriety to Kingswood school. Had it been ably governed, it must have been much more extensively useful. As the income is almost nothing, it may be presumed, that men of learning would either seldom appear there, or soon withdraw from this land of famine. The truth is, and it is a sad defect, that few of the masters have been scholars. A profession of extraordinary piety, and a little dexterity and manœuvre, have in-

* "Whate'er is best administered, is best."

introduced men into the pædagogal chair, who were so far from being familiar with the learned languages, that they did not half understand English. Those who ought to have been teachers, were sometimes pupils to the boys. When they had acquired a tolerable share of learning, they prudently set out upon their adventures; and the consequence, which was a perpetual succession of masters, could scarcely be favourable to the character of the school, or to the progress of it's pupils. Some, it must be granted, were of a different character. We have known several, who were men of learning and information; and the gentleman who now presides there, is certainly superior to most of his predecessors.

There are some errors in this institution, which to mention, is to condemn. It is a rule, that the boys shall rise at

four. They are not permitted to play, on any consideration ; because, as Mr Wesley says, “ he that plays while he is a boy, will play when he is a man : ” and the frequent returns of prayers, and sermons, and exhortations, are such, as to give, not a taste of religion, but a loathing. Each of these carries absurdity upon the face of it. What shall a boy do, shivering in the cold, from four till eight in a winter’s morning ? It is true, he may hear prayers and sing hymns ; but we will venture to say, he will be so heartily sick of both, that they will scarcely do him much good ! The rule concerning play is, if possible, still more unreasonable than the former. Every one knows, that much, and even violent exercise is necessary for boys. They have, in all ages, been indulged in youthful sports and recreations, from

the courtly and elegant Horace, to the most illustrious of modern names : and yet, it did not prevent their future eminence ! Of the strictness of confinement, and the frequency of religious exercises, it is sufficient to observe, that experience has clearly decided against them. Nature will brook nothing violently contrary to her dictates : and the consequence has been, that most of the boys, who were educated at this school, were no sooner at liberty from the restraints of so rude a discipline, than they eagerly plunged into almost every excess, and took large draughts of the cup of pleasure. It remains only to observe, that the school is supported partly by those parents who can pay for the education of their children, and partly by annual collections, which amounted in 1790 to upwards of 900l.

In the early stages of itinerancy, Mr Wesley's sentiments suffered a variety of revolutions, or at least of progressions, and sometimes led him to take notice, both from the pulpit and the press, of several things, which might well have been spared. A discourse on tea, or a learned lecture on the importance and superior advantages of celibacy, will scarcely strike the mind as the most proper subjects of clerical discussion, or as having any necessary connexion with our religious concerns. As for the first of these, there seems to be but one point of view in which it is worth notice, and in that view, it belongs, not to theology, but to medicine. Of the latter, every one must judge for himself. An apostle might surely recommend a single life, in times of danger and general perplexity, without ever intending it to be establish-

ed as a standing rule. Our Saviour's reflections on this subject, as well as those of St. Paul, seem merely applicable to a particular season. And though Mr Wesley insists, that "celibacy is the more excellent way," and that St. Paul has laid down such advantages of it, "as are by no means confined to a state of persecution," we beg leave to doubt the truth of a position, which, if generally admitted, would tend to the destruction of society, and is directly levelled against the unalterable laws of nature, and a positive command of it's great author. To combat these, is to be at war with reason. The doctrine he so zealously inculcated, is not only unscriptural, but dangerous. It may well enough comport with the papal superstition; but protestantism must ever abhor so chimerical a system. Among those sects, who

have most favoured it, the purity they pretended to induce, by an opposition to the law of nature, was in fact never attained ; and they frequently fell into vices, which were the natural consequence of so absurd a principle.

It is hard to say, from what quarter Mr Wesley derived his notions of celibacy ; whether from the saints of the Roman calendar, or from the single brotherhood at Hernhuth. It is enough that he did imbibe them ; and that several followed his example. It is not a little remarkable, that in the infancy of methodism, his brother Hall should have fallen into the same dream ; and that a man, to whom, in the sequel, twenty wives had scarcely seemed sufficient, should strangely take it into his head, that he had received the gift of conti-

nence, and was called to be “an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven!”

It is ridiculous enough, to observe the use that was frequently made of this sentiment. Several young women in Mr Wesley's connexion were impressed with similar singularities. They took it into their heads, that they were sacred, devoted things, and not to be profaned by approximation to the other sex. Instead of marrying and guiding the house, as an apostle exhorts the younger women, they were to serve God in an immaculate solitude; to be separate from the world, and to guard the vestal fire! Things of this nature, certainly carry no promising aspect. They are at least whimsical, if they be not something worse; and were productive of much ridicule and disgust. Whoever was prejudiced against Mr Wesley, and reprobated his general

plan, would not fail to embrace the occasion, to form a variety of conjectures on his adoption of such principles, and to point a thousand sarcasms at his whole system. And this was actually the case. Some of his religious antagonists took the liberty to demand, what could have induced him, with such sentiments and professions, to marry: to which he bluntly replied, “for reasons best known to myself!” Others went still farther, and insisted, that he must have had some sinister views, in the recommendation of the single state. Charity would induce us to hope, this was not true; and that his peculiar views of religion were the only motives by which he was influenced. Indeed the goodness of his intentions is more than probable: it is indisputable. We are only sorry, that he gave any occasion to his enemies to think other-

wife. By a similar error, an improper accommodation of a particular rule to general use, he had formed a persuasion, that christians of a particular standard should imitate the first church at Jerusalem, and have all things in common; and he accounts for the religious deficiencies of some of his people, by saying, “these believers did not take the word of God for their rule. They had not all things in common. I can’t see how believers can continue such, if they are not willing at least to have all things in common.” And for some time, he was seriously in doubt, whether he ought not to put them to the test!

With Mr Wesley’s ideas of celibacy, it is no wonder that, for some years, he opposed the matrimonial engagements of his preachers, and on this account threatened some of them with expulsion.

But his own marriage, which has been mentioned as having taken place in 1751, introduced a different system, and was equally matter of offence to some, and of astonishment to others. Of the lady's family we have little information. But the connexion was unfortunate. There never was a more preposterous union. And though it is pretty certain that no loves lighted their torches on this occasion, it is as much to be presumed, that neither did Plutus preside at the solemnity. Mrs Wesley's property was too inconsiderable, to warrant the supposition of one of his biographers, that it was a match of interest. Had she been ever so rich, it was nothing to him; for every shilling of her fortune remained at her own disposal: and neither the years, nor the temper of the parties, could give

any reason to suppose them violently enamoured.

That this lady accepted his proposals, seems much less surprising, than that he should have made them. It is probable, his situation at the head of a sect, and the authority it conferred, was not without it's charms in the eye of an ambitious female ; it being pretty generally admitted, that the principle of the motto, " aut Cæsar, aut nullus," is by no means confined to the lords of the creation. But we much wonder, that Mr Wesley should have appeared, in this instance at least, so little acquainted with himself and with human nature. He certainly did not possess the conjugal virtues. He had no taste for the tranquillity of domestic retirement : while his situation, as an itinerant, kept him constantly in motion, and left him little leisure for

those attentions, which are absolutely necessary to the comfort of married life.

His excursions through every part of the nation, and his epistolary correspondences with women of all ages and classes, could have no happy effect on a person of Mrs Wesley's complexion. Nor was she by any means reconciled to the idea, that she possessed not the influence among the societies, which she had promised herself; having always settled it as a principle, that, as the wife of Mr Wesley, she had an undoubted title to a full moiety of his authority.

His vexations in the married state were infinite. On one occasion she seized his letters and other papers, and put them into the hands of such as she knew to be his enemies, that they might be printed, as presumptive proofs of illicit connexions: and frequently, when the

spirit of jealousy came upon her, she would order a chaise, and drive a hundred miles, to observe from the window, who was in the carriage with him on his entrance into a town.

When Mr Wesley married, he certainly ventured on the most unhappy connexion, in which he ever was engaged. It is obvious to reflect, though no great encomium on his knowledge of the sex, that had he searched the kingdom through, he could not have pitched upon a person less proper for a gentleman in his situation. The passions of this lady sometimes hurried her into outrage and indecency. More than once she laid violent hands upon his person, and tore those venerable locks which had sufficiently suffered from the ravages of time. She left him for the first time in 1771: and they finally parted about the year

1775. So that when he was told she had left his house, determined never to return, we cannot much wonder at the *sang froid* with which he reflects upon it; “non eam reliqui; non dimisi; non revocabo.” At her death, which happened at Chelsea, in October 1781, she bequeathed her fortune, amounting, it is said, to about five thousand pounds, to a Mr Vizelle. To Mr Wesley she left nothing but a ring.

His domestic uneasinesses had little influence on his public life. The only considerable interval of labour, was during a consumptive disorder, which attacked him not long after his marriage. During this illness, which lasted about four months, he retired first to Lewisham, and then to the Hotwells at Bristol; when, not being able to preach, he employed himself in writing notes on the New

Testament. It was at this time, as he informs us, that, "to prevent vile panegyric," he wrote the following epitaph, dated November 26. 1753:

Here lieth
the body of JOHN WESLEY,
a brand plucked out of the burning:
who died of a consumption in the fifty-first year
of his age,
not leaving, after his debts are paid, ten pounds
behind him :
Praying,
God be merciful to me an unprofitable servant !
"He ordered, that this, if any inscription,
should be placed on his tomb-stone."

In the March following he began to preach again. In August he had a relapse, and was again ordered by Dr Fothergill to return to the Hot-wells, where his regimen was very near being cut

short, by the weight of a jack, that fell upon his head. Soon recovering, he went on as usual, and extended his labours from the three kingdoms to all their dependencies. The Isles of Wight and Scilly, Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, and most parts of Wales were visited in their turn, till circuits were established in each, and supplied with the most punctual regularity.

Whoever is acquainted with the subject, must have perceived, in the progress of methodism, the operation of a principle which, in every stage, has debased and degraded it; and that is, a frequent tendency to enthusiasm and extravagance. The instances upon record are too numerous to be particularly noticed. It will be sufficient to distinguish the most remarkable. Among these is the case of George Bell, formerly a ser-

jeant in the guards, who took it into his head to pretend an exprefs revelation, that the laſt of February 1763, would be the period of the conſummation of all things ; and by this ridiculous chimera, turned the heads of half the metropolis. Not content with this, he had the impious preſumption, to pretend to work miracles. Mr Weſley, who gave too much encouragement to this insolent enthufiaſt, ſays, that by his prayers, a young woman was inſtantly cured of an inveterate complaint in her breaſt ; and, in his uſual mode of deciſion, obſerves, “ 1. She was ill ; 2. ſhe is well ; 3. ſhe was ſo in a moment. Now, which of theſe can with any modeſty be denied ? ” As the evidence is not before the public, it is impoſſible to remark upon it : but, on the other hand, as we conceive miracles to have ceaſed ſoon after the apo-

stolic age, we beg leave to say, the report of an individual, or even of half a dozen brain-sick enthusiasts, is not sufficient to establish a principle, exploded by the majority, and the wisest of mankind.

Another subject of his miraculous operations, was a blind fidler. Having anointed his eyes with clay or spittle, (we forget which) he pronounced the authoritative EPHPHATHA, and commanded them to be opened. But in this instance at least, the servant was not "as his master." And from such a case, one would suppose, every one not absolutely lunatic, must perceive, that this observation* of our Saviour was not intended for universal application. The word of our military apostle was not with power. The man continued, as he had long been,

* Every one that is perfect, shall be as his master.

as blind as a stone : while the operator, whose spiritual pride was fortunately seconded by a little convenient subtilty, not at all discouraged by so stubborn a fact, nor a jot more dubious of his mission, as a worker of miracles, vindicated himself at the expence of his patient, and declared, he had not faith to be healed ! How it came to pass, that a worker of miracles could neither confer nor increase faith, under such circumstances, does not clearly appear : but it was unfortunate for the patient, that the powers of his operator were limited to one species of miracle ; that the gift of faith and of vision happened to be two distinct operations ; and that from this unfortunate defect, the poor fellow was under the necessity of remaining as he was, and of continuing his occupation of fiddling in Moorfields for his subsistence,

It is a little extraordinary too, that the case of this man should be so much more obstinate, than that of Mary Special, the young woman he is said to have cured, and that a power so remarkably conferred, should have been so suddenly withdrawn! Since that time, he is said to have received another revelation; that he should be incapable of pain; and that he should never die. Whether he is yet alive, we know not. If he be, it is hoped his neighbours will keep a sharp look out, that they may be edified with the prospect of his translation. Perhaps some of them may be so fortunate as to catch the mantle of this Elijah!

The last essay at the trade of prophecy is of a later date. In 1789, it was revealed by an angel, to a young girl in a northern county, that, on a certain day in that year, the wicked should be swept

with the besom of destruction, from the face of the earth. This was excellent news for the visionaries, who believed the report. The girl was consulted as an expounder of the fates. Not the oracular tripods of former times, nor even the holy sepulchre at Mecca, were ever visited with more reverent devotion. Whole troops of pilgrims resorted to this female oracle. Stammerers, who fancied themselves called to be preachers, were informed by the condescending angel, whether they should be appointed the teachers and instructors of mankind; and multitudes, who were too lazy to work, and too dissipated to stay at home, travelled on various pretences, to be instructed in futurity, and to learn whose lands they should occupy in the approaching desolation. How they adjusted the partition, we are not well in-

formed. We only know, it was not without some bickerings; and that a little cobbler, not far from Sunderland, put in his claim to the estate of a rich general in the neighbourhood. The affair ended as might naturally be expected. It was a business more carnal than spiritual, and involved a commerce certainly not angelic: so that in due time the public credulity subsiding, and other circumstances rendering it necessary, the girl and her paramour wisely decamped, and embarked together for the continent.

It must be granted, that the extravagancies of individuals are not always to be imputed to a collective body. There is only one instance in which they ought to be so imputed; and that is, when there are some general principles, peculiar to that body, which naturally

produce them. It is true also, that neither the authors nor the abettors of this last imposture were methodists, but rather a detachment from the main body, who, under the direction of two ignorant men, and on pretence of superior sanctity, had withdrawn from the connexion. But such proceedings are always worthy of the severest animadversion; and they are particularly noticed in these pages, not only by way of caution to others, who may be inclined to similar extravagancies; but chiefly because Mr Wesley did not sufficiently guard against them. And it is very remarkable, that for the last thirty years, almost every thing of this kind, whether among the methodists, or those who have seceded from them, has originated with the most vehement sticklers for his scheme of perfection.

The truth is, that, from an excess of charity, he was extremely subject to imposition, and too readily gave credit to any report from those, of whose sanctity he had conceived a favourable impression. Hence his notion of the witnesses of perfection. They said they were perfect, and he believed them. He was a warm opposer of the idea, that miracles have ceased; and took it for granted, which was surely as wild a dream as ever entered the mind of a sensible man, that had we as much faith as the primitive christians, we should still be endued with similar powers. Hence he was a believer in modern miracles; and challenges any man, who has read Montgeran's demonstration of the miracles at the tomb of Abbè Paris, "to doubt of them, if he can." How it may be among the Jansenists in France, is another question; but in this

nation, there are few sensible men, who do not doubt them; and most people will be of opinion, that their invalidity is sufficiently demonstrated by Dr Campbell, in his answer to Mr Hume.

In this connexion, it will not be impertinent to present the reader with the following relation. It is taken from the seventh volume of Mr Wesley's sermons, and is produced by him as an authentic fact, in illustration of St. Paul's allusion, in the 13th chap. of 1. Cor. to the gift of prophecy. He relates it in these words :

“ A little before the conclusion of the late war in Flanders, one who came from thence gave us a very strange relation. I knew not what judgment to form of this; but waited till John Haim should come over, of whose veracity I could no more doubt, than of his understanding.

The account he gave was this. ‘ Jonathan Pyrah was a member of our society in Flanders. I knew him some years, and knew him to be a man of an unblameable character. One day he was summoned to appear before the board of general officers. One of them said, what is this that we hear of you? We hear you are turned prophet, and that you foretel the downfal of the bloody house of Bourbon, and the haughty house of Austria. We should be glad if you were a real prophet, and if your prophecies came true. But what sign do you give, to convince us you are so, and that your predictions will come to pass? He readily answered, gentlemen, I give you a sign. To-morrow, at twelve o’clock, you shall have such a storm of thunder and lightning, as you never had before, since you came into Flanders. I give

you a second sign : as little as any of you expect any such thing, as little appearance of it as there is now, you shall have a general engagement with the French within three days. I give you a third sign : I shall be ordered to advance in the first line. If I am a false prophet, I shall be shot dead at the first discharge. But if I am a true prophet, I shall only receive a musket ball in the calf of my left leg.' At twelve the next day, there was such thunder and lightning as they never had in Flanders. On the third day, contrary to all expectation, was the general battle of Fontenoy. He was ordered to advance in the first line. And at the very first discharge, he did receive a musket ball in the calf of his left leg.

“ And yet all this profited him nothing, either for temporal or eternal happiness. When the war was over, he re-

turned to England ; but the story was got before him : in consequence of which he was sent for by the Countess of St—s*, and several other persons of quality, who were desirous of hearing so surprising an account from his own mouth. He could not bear so much honour. It quite turned his brain. In a little time he went stark mad : and so he continues to this day, living still, as I apprehend, on Webley Moor Side, within a few miles of Leeds.”

So much for this military prophet. Mr Wesley remarks in a note, that he is since dead : but we are not able to ascertain whether there be any account of him and his predictions in the papers, or other periodical publications of that time. If any gentleman is in possession of information on this subject, the intelligence is worth communicating to the public.

* We suppose Stairs.

C H A P. IV.

METHODISM IN NORTH AMERICA.—EXECUTION
OF THE DEED OF DECLARATION IN 1784.

FOR a considerable time, Mr Whitefield was the only methodist who directed his attention to the new world, where he was, if possible, even more popular than in Europe. There he finished his life and his labours ; and his remains, which were deposited in a small town in New England, called Newbury Port, remaining, through the temperature of the vault in which they were interred, in a state of remarkable preservation, are frequently, from curiosity or veneration, visited by travellers on the continent.

After some years, several methodists having emigrated from this country, and formed societies in New York and Philadelphia, wrote to Conference for a supply of preachers. In consequence of this application, Mr Boardman and Mr Pillmoor, the ablest and most respectable that were ever sent to America, offered their services, and were cheerfully accepted. They took with them fifty pounds as a present from Conference, and landed on the continent, in the latter end of 1769. The latter retired from the connexion in disgust, and going a second time abroad, was ordained by an American bishop, and is now pastor of one of the churches in Philadelphia.

Being presently followed by others, their success was considerable; so that on the commencement of the late war, they had raised more than twenty preach-

ers, and formed societies in Maryland, Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania, including about three thousand persons. During the war, they still proceeded in the prosecution of their plan, and in spite of the interruptions of such a scene of confusion and blood, were continually on the increase. They might however have been much more successful, had they observed a proper reserve on the score of politics. Those, who had any discretion, did so; but some were imprudent enough, forgetting their immediate employment, to take part in a controversy, with which they had little concern; and, by this means, rendered themselves obnoxious to the civil powers. One preacher, who now resides not a hundred miles from London, was obliged, from some imprudencies he had committed, in the over-officiousness of

his zeal, to make a precipitate retreat: and we hope he is as thankful to providence as he ought to be, for so happy an escape. The anniversary of that day we advise him to keep sacred.

Another of his brethren was equally fortunate. Having been seized by some American scouts, and brought before their commanding officer, "So Sir, said the general, after observing the posture of our affairs, and giving all the intelligence you could procure, to the British army, you come to me for a passport! But you shall have it, Sir; and when you arrive in England, do us justice, and say, we have dealt generously with you." We mention these anecdotes, which we know to be authentic, to shew how absurd it was for missionaries, especially at such a time, and in so active a manner, to interfere with politics; and to remind

them what a figure they had cut, had their zeal been recompenced, as usual, by the summary process of the tar-brush or the halter!

In the history of American methodism, during this period, a circumstance happened, peculiarly important to the societies, and too remarkable to be omitted. When Mr Wesley changed his politics, and published his "Calm Address to the American Colonies," many copies were shipped for New York. A gentleman of that country, alarmed for the safety of a people, with whom he was connected, and trembling for the probable consequences, should a pamphlet of such a tendency pass into general circulation, laid violent hands upon it, and destroyed or returned the whole impression: so that, till a considerable time after this transaction, scarcely any one had heard

that such a piece had been published. This incident was the salvation of methodism in America.

Mr Wesley, who was frequently pressed to return once more to the continent, never visited that country after the commencement of itinerancy; which is the more surprising, as he had not the least fear of the sea, and as there was a powerful incentive to his crossing the water, in the apprehension he had formed concerning one or two of the foreign preachers, whom he suspected of some designs of independency. His last foreign voyage was to Holland. On Thursday, June 12. 1783, he embarked at Harwich, arrived the next day at Helvoetsluys, and went on to Rotterdam, the Hague, Haerlem, Leyden, Utrecht, and Amsterdam. Nothing material happened during this journey. He preached

several times in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Utrecht, and was particularly pleased with the dress of the Dutch ladies, which he says, was “*simplex munditiis*, plain and neat in the highest degree;” and with the peculiar care they take of their streets and houses. He controverts the common opinion, that the Hollanders are of a “cold, phlegmatic, unfriendly temper,” and says, that he had not met with a “more warmly affectionate people in all Europe; not even in Ireland!” And in his usual fondness for simplicity of attire, he takes care, more than once, to mention the dress of these ladies. “I observe, says he, of all the pious people in Holland, that, without any rule, but the word of God, they dress as plain as Miss March did formerly, and Miss Johnson does now! And considering the vast disadvantage they are under, having no

connexion with each other, and being under no such discipline at all as we are, I wonder at the grace of God that is in them."

What inference Mr Wesley would deduce from this consideration we know not; but the natural conclusion seems to be, that the most fervent piety does not necessarily depend upon the methodistic discipline, and that a considerable part at least of that discipline, may without danger be dispensed with. If these ladies dressed with such propriety, though without any other rule than the word of God, then we conclude, that no other rule is necessary. We suspect too, that the imposition of any other is improper, and an invasion of the rights of men; and that in all those inferior circumstances, which we properly rank among things indifferent and nonessential, common sense is a

sufficient directory, and every one may safely be left to his own judgment.

In the beginning of July Mr Wesley returned to London; but does not take his leave of Holland without a ring at the moravians. He had gone over to Zieft, the settlement of the German brethren: of which he says, “it is a small village, finely situated, with woods on every side, and much resembles one of the large colleges in Oxford. Here I met with my old friend, Bishop Antone, whom I had not seen for near fifty years. He did not ask me to eat or drink; for ‘it is not their custom!’” And there is an inn! But they were all very courteous. And we were welcome to *buy* any thing that we pleased at their shops! I cannot see how it is possible for this community, to avoid growing immensely rich.”

Whether he had any particular design in his visit to Holland, we are not informed. If he meant to establish a mission from this country, it was an improbable attempt, nor has any part of it been taken into the methodist plan. Perhaps it was a mere visit of civility to some religious friends.

As Mr Wesley advanced in years, he grew anxious for the perpetuity of that system of doctrine and discipline, and the whole of that œconomy which he had so long laboured to establish : and many of his friends uniting in the same views, several consultations took place, and various plans were proposed for this purpose. During his life, it was natural to conclude, from the long term of years in which he had presided at their head, from their wonderful increase during his administration, and from the singular ve-

neration in which he was held, that his authority would remain inviolate, and consequently, that he would be considered as a centre of union by all the preachers, whether local or itinerant. They looked up to him with admiration for his learning and abilities ; they esteemed him for his unexampled labours ; and they loved him as another parent. But it was easy to perceive, that these considerations, which cemented the union betwixt the preachers and him, could be applicable to himself alone. They had been accustomed to yield to him an obedience, which they would scarcely allow to be due to any other : nor indeed was there any probability that his place would be filled by a successor, so calculated for the head of a sect, and so wonderfully fitted for preserving an ascendancy over the minds of men. For this species of

government he certainly has not left an equal.

Considerations of this sort induced him to think of a plan for their future union. He warned the preachers in print, that they might expect, that those who aimed “at ease, honour, or profit, or had any thing in view, but the glory of God,” would not remain in the connexion: and he predicted, that some would “procure preferment in the church, and others turn independents, and get separate congregations.” He advised, that, on notice of his decease, all the preachers, in Britain and Ireland, should repair to London within six weeks; that, after a day of solemn fasting and prayer, they should draw up articles of agreement, to be signed by those who chose to act in concert; and chuse, from the body of travelling preachers, a commit-

tee of three, five, or seven; one of them to be moderator, in order to propose persons to be tried and admitted as preachers, or to be excluded the connexion; to fix the circuit of each preacher for the ensuing year, to appoint the time of the next conference, and to superintend the general œconomy of the societies.

It was not easy, and perhaps it was not necessary, in this case, to fix upon a plan which should keep so large a body, and with such a number of different movements, exactly in their usual course. Some deviations from the original system might be not an injury, but an improvement. This however was approved by the preachers in conference. It was ordered to be printed; and it was more likely to answer Mr Wesley's purpose, than any other we have seen. It intimated, what was certainly true, the strict-

equality of the preachers ; it paid a proper attention to what they had learnt to consider as their inalienable privilege, the right to vote in conference, of which each was equally a member ; and it provided for the conduct of the undertaking in general, by the consent and participation of every individual, who was admitted as an itinerant.

In order, if possible, to lay a foundation for this future union, Mr Wesley called upon the preachers, assembled in conference, to sign an agreement, during his life, stating that they would “ devote themselves entirely to God ; daily denying themselves, and taking up their crosses ; that they would preach the old methodist doctrines, contained in the minutes of conferences, and no other ; and that they would enforce the whole methodist discipline, laid down in the said minutes.”

This agreement was signed by many of the preachers ; but whether they signed it or not, it was of no sort of consequence. Should any subsequent event throw a different light on the subject, and create different views in the majority, such a signature would never be considered as of sufficient force to prevent any alterations which prudence or caprice might dictate : and it was indeed an useless and unnecessary restraint. The views of mankind vary at different periods. Deviations from original plans and preconceived opinions are often the necessary consequence of revolving years, and the mutability of human affairs : and the truth may safely be trusted to vindicate and support itself. If the doctrine and discipline in question should be found, on repeated trial, and by the experience of many years, to be the best and most scrip-

tural, there was no fear of it's continuance, enlightened as the world now is, without the assistance of subscriptions and agreements : and if the contrary, the sooner both should undergo a reformation, the better. But it is a fond, and we believe, a very natural conceit, that our own system must be superior to every other. In this instance, most of us are popes, and in our little way, contend, by implication at least, for the old doctrine of infallibility. Mr Wesley, sensible and judicious as he was in many respects, was not superior to this common foible. He had no idea of any thing so perfect and complete in all it's parts, as the doctrine and discipline he had introduced : and he naturally concluded, that the preservation of methodism, in it's original purity, was the preservation of the christian doctrine, in theory and in practice.

As the preachers were perfectly satisfied with the sketch drawn up for their conduct, after Mr Wesley's decease, they remained quite at ease ; and had no suspicion of any change of measures. But they were soon roused from this lethargy. By the machinations of ignorance and ambition, some years after the publication of this plan, a scheme was in contemplation, and presently put in practice, by the famous deed of declaration, which was executed about the year 1784. This deed, in the mind of the projector, had two objects ; one ostensible, the other concealed : and as it usually happens in such cases, that which was concealed, was, in his estimation, of at least equal importance with the other. The ostensible object, was the security of the meeting houses. That which was concealed, was the exclusion of some

preachers of the best character, but, on political accounts, obnoxious to some of Mr Wesley's friends. As the houses were respectively settled on a certain number of trustees, for the use of preachers appointed by Mr Wesley in conference, during his natural life, or by the conference after his decease, it was judged necessary, and accordingly proposed by Dr Coke, in Mr Wesley's name, and acceded to by the preachers assembled at Bristol in 1783, that a deed, declarative of the meaning of the word conference, a term unknown in law, should be executed, and enrolled in the high court of chancery. As every itinerant had always considered himself, on his admission to travel, as a member of conference, and as the intended selection of one hundred was industriously concealed, not a man, except a few, who were in the se-

cret, had the least idea of what was going forward. Considering themselves as a sort of irregulars, among whom all were equal, or at least, where there could be no superiority, but that of character and abilities, the ninety-one, who were to be excluded, till the very moment the combustibles were prepared, the match lighted, and the explosion ready to take place, that was to offer them up as sacrifices to the ambition of a few, remained without the least suspicion.—When they saw the deed, it was with astonishment and indignation. The injustice of the thing itself, and the singular manœuvres by which the sanction of this forlorn hope had been obtained to their own exclusion, stared them full in the face. They found, that in consenting to this deed, they had consented, that all the affairs of the connexion

should be lodged in the hundred mentioned in the declaration; that they should be the lords and rulers of the rest; and if they thought proper, should have it in their power to turn any other preacher out of conference by the shoulders, and tell him he had no business there. The exclusion itself was both an iniquitous and a mortifying measure. But the partiality of it rendered it still more oppressive. Some of the oldest and ablest preachers in the connexion were excluded. Many of the selected members were not only deficient in abilities, but some of them, at the time of their insertion in the deed, were only upon trial, and not yet admitted as itinerants: while the chief qualifications of several others were ignorance, fanaticism, and ductility. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder if the persons ex-

cluded thought themselves aggrieved. They were really so, and they made no scruple to declare their sentiments. They sent circular letters, inviting all the preachers to canvas the business at the ensuing conference. A large number assembled ; when such an instance of human weakness was displayed, as, we hope, is not often to be found. Though a great number of the preachers were, as averse to the deed, as those who had so decidedly opposed it, and had repeatedly execrated the measure, both by letter and in conversation, they had not the courage to avow their sentiments in conference. When Mr Wesley made a speech, in which, with a severity that may be better conceived than expressed, he inveighed against the five preachers who opposed the measure, and invited all who were of his mind to stand up ;

they all rose to a man. The five were found guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors, in having presumed to condemn a plan he had adopted, and it was unanimously determined, though at least forty or fifty of the conference were of the same judgment with those they condemned, that they should either make concessions, or be dismissed. An instance of duplicity, as indecent and dishonourable, as we hope, for the honour of human nature, it is uncommon!

At this conference was the late venerable Mr Fletcher. Urged by his entreaties, and anxious for the restoration of peace, the preachers in the opposition apologized to Mr Wesley, for printing the circular letter, without having first appealed to conference. The only circumstance in which these preachers have reason to condemn themselves is, that

their zeal for the re-establishment of concord and unanimity carried them too far, and induced them to acknowledge, that in this mode of proceeding they had *sinned* (for that was the word Mr Wesley insisted upon) and to make concessions much greater than he or any man had a right to demand, or they, with any propriety could comply with. In consequence of this apology, he assured them, in a verbal message, communicated by a preacher, now living, that he would take measures to put them on a footing with the rest. Satisfied with this information, they took a circuit as usual, till, finding that his promise would not be observed, and that it was in vain to expect redress, they left the connexion. The remonstrants having many friends, this transaction produced great heats and animosities. As it is little understood, even

among the methodists, and as in all the remarks upon it in the *Arminian Magazine*, and by other channels of information, it has been inaccurately stated, or greatly misrepresented ; and above all, as it formed a new æra, and a very remarkable revolution in the policy of methodism, we have thought proper thus circumstantially to state it, for the information of our readers ; assuring them, that this account is as accurate and impartial as truth and candour can make it.

It has often been asked, by those who were ignorant of the circumstances of this affair, as well as by those who were the friends and promoters of it, what was the pretence for all this opposition, and in what respects these preachers were injured by the deed of declaration. To the latter an answer is unnecessary ; for were they not well aware of it's par-

tiality, of the precedence it confers on them, and the injury it does the excluded members, they had never been so forward to defend it. They patronize it, because they feel the superiority it gives them ; and consequently, because they know it to be unjust.

But to the former, and to all who wish for information on this subject, we answer, the injury in this case is obvious. The deed deprives the excluded preachers of their indisputable right to a vote in conference ; a right which, by earliest usage, and in the very nature of the thing, was theirs from the moment they were admitted as itinerants ; and from which they could not justly be deposed, but by some mental or moral incapacity. It places them in an inferiority to others, to whom they are in all respects equal ; and converting their

equals into masters, it obliges those who are not included in the deed, either to leave the connexion, or to submit to their authority, and to go where they shall appoint. We may naturally suppose, that nothing can be more mortifying to a man of sense, than to lie at the mercy, and be under the direction of a man, or a number of men, of whose integrity he has no opinion, or whom he knows to be ignorant and incompetent. It is easy to say ; and it has often been said, by people who were of one or both these descriptions (for a man of sense and candour would be infinitely superior to such sentiments) “let them seek some other employment.” But where is the justice of obliging a man, who has spent his prime in such a service, to seek, in his old age, another mode of support, and when the lamp of life be-

gins to be extinguished, to enter upon a new scene of action, which would require all the industry and exertions of youth? There is a cruelty in this mode of thinking and acting, for which language has no name sufficiently expressive of its unfeelingness and malignancy: and sincerely do we despise the man who is capable of it. We are sorry to say, that in the progress of methodism, we have seen much of this spirit; and as we abhor every species of oppression, we are happy in an opportunity of holding it up as it deserves, to the public execration.

Having thus animadverted upon what we deem a most impolitic transaction, it is proper to observe, that this was a violation of the original compact, to which Mr Wesley's superior understanding was justly abhorrent, and into which he was forced by the mere dint of fo-

phistry and importunity. Though the executive department was in him, the plan had a less reputable origin, and was always, and we believe, justly ascribed to another source. In the case of Mr Wesley, we can lament the infirmities of age, and pity a ductility which we cannot approve; but in favour of his advisers in this business we make no such distinction.

C H A P. V.

CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS AND ORDINATION
OF PRIESTS FOR AMERICA, BY IMPOSITION OF
THE HANDS OF MR WESLEY.

AS Dr Coke is largely concerned in the events of this chapter, it will be necessary briefly to inform the public who he is. Of his family and connexions in early life we have nothing to say. But it is proper to observe, that he is a clergyman, and received his academical education at Jesus College, Oxford, where he was admitted to the degree of L. L. D. In 1776 he relinquished a curacy in the west of England, and joined Mr Wesley, who, since that time,

has employed him as a kind of vicar general, empowering him to visit the societies in different parts of the kingdom, and once or twice to hold conferences in Ireland, when it was inconvenient for himself to cross the water. From his known character, and a certain consequence he derived from his ecclesiastical and academical distinctions, he has often been suspected of casting a longing eye to the supremacy, after Mr Wesley's decease; and some have thought he would attain it. But we doubt not to predict the contrary. The chair will certainly be filled by no individual. And in case of such a succession, the distinction between the former and the present possessor would be too strongly marked, and might produce, from the united influence of reason and propriety in some, and of envy and jealousy in others, an opposition, which

every man, who has the least regard for his own peace, would be careful to avoid.

At the conclusion of the war in America, and several years after the establishment of methodism on the continent, this gentleman, by the direction of Mr Wesley, and under circumstances too remarkable to pass without notice, paid them a visit.

There was a time when, by those who were best acquainted with the subject, it was supposed, for obvious reasons, that a final separation had taken place of the methodists on this side the Atlantic, from those beyond it. We shall explain this. It is to be observed, that from the first appointment of preachers by the conference in England, to the foreign mission, the American methodists were always considered as brethren, and their

numbers and the names of their societies regularly inserted in the minutes. During the war this usage was discontinued. The rebels, as they were called, were expunged from the list. The revolution of affairs abroad, was productive of a correspondent revolution at the City Road. A lucky hit converted rebels into simple revolutionists. The Americans again appeared in the minutes. A variety of consultations were held in the cabinet concerning them; where a resolution was agreed to, and as suddenly executed, that a letter should be prepared by Mr Wesley, congratulating them on their freedom from the "state and the hierarchy," and exhorting them to "stand fast in that liberty with which God had so strangely made them free." At the same time and place, he gave ordination, *more episcopi*, by imposition of hands, to

several preachers, who were to embark for America, and consecrated Dr Coke one of the bishops of the methodist episcopal church in that country; making him the bearer of his congratulatory letter, and giving him special instructions to consecrate, as his colleague in the episcopacy, a lay preacher, who had resided several years on the continent. The Doctor, attended by the new made presbyters, crossed the water, and executed his commission; consecrating Mr Astbury, and ordaining several others, as presbyters of this new church, and beginning or concluding the solemnity with a very remarkable sermon, in defence of these extraordinary proceedings. To assist their devotions, a liturgy was extracted by Mr Wesley from that of the church of England, from which we have been informed, particular care was taken

to expunge every expression that had a pointed reference to the authority of kings.

Before we enter upon an examination of this part of Mr Wesley's conduct, it will be proper to state his reasons for such a deviation from his former principles, by subjoining a copy of the pastoral letter, which, on this occasion he transmitted to the societies abroad. It is addressed "To Dr Coke, Mr Astbury, and our Brethren in North America;" and is conceived in remarkable terms.

"By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother country, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil

authority is exercised over them, partly by the congress, partly the provincial assemblies. But no one exercises, or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of the states desire my advice; and in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

“ Lord King’s account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently, have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace’s sake; but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national church, to which I belonged.

“ But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops, who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers. So that for some hundred miles together, there is none either to baptize, or to administer the Lord’s supper. Here therefore, my scruples are at an end: and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man’s right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

“ I have accordingly appointed Dr Coke and Mr Francis Astbury, to be joint superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord’s supper. And I have prepared a liturgy, differing little

from that of the church of England (I think the best constituted national church in the world) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day in all the congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

“ If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

“ It has indeed been proposed, to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object. 1. I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one; but could not prevail: 2. If they consented, we know

the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would that entangle us? 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the scripture and the primitive church. And we judge it best, that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free."

As Dr Coke's sermon* on the consecration of Mr Astbury to the office of a bishop, is to the same purpose, and a laboured defence of Mr Wesley's conduct, we extract from it all that relates to this

* Published at Baltimore in Virginia, in 1784.

subject. The first proposition, which in this sermon, the Doctor engages to treat, is a defence of his conduct in the consecration of his colleague ; which he does in these words :

“ The church of England, of which the society of methodists in general have, till lately professed themselves a part, did for many years groan in America, under grievances of the heaviest kind. Subjected to a hierarchy, which weighs every thing in the scale of politics, it's most important interests were repeatedly sacrificed to the supposed advantages of England. The churches were in general filled with the parasites and bottle companions of the rich and great. The humble and most importunate entreaties of the oppressed flocks, yea, the representations of a general assembly itself, were contemned and despised. Every

thing sacred must bow down at the feet of a party; the holiness and happiness of mankind be sacrificed to their views; and the drunkard, the fornicator, and the extortioner triumphed over bleeding Zion, because they were faithful abettors of the ruling powers. Blessed be God, and praised be his holy name, that the memorable revolution* has struck off these intolerable fetters, and broken the antichristian union, which before subsisted between church and state. And had there been no other advantage arising from that glorious epoch, this itself, I believe, would have made ample compensation for all the calamities of the war. One happy consequence of which, was the expulsion of most of those hirelings, who “ate the fat, and cloathed themselves with the wool, but strengthened not the diseased, neither healed that

* In America.

which was sick, neither bound up that which was broken, neither brought again that which was driven away, neither sought that which was lost."

"The parochial churches in general being hereby vacant, our people were deprived of the sacraments through the greatest part of these states, and continue so still. What method can we take at this critical juncture? God has given us sufficient resources in ourselves, and after mature deliberation, we believe that we are called to draw them forth.

"But what right have you to ordain?" The same right as most of the reformed churches in Christendom: our ordination, in it's lowest view, being equal to any of the presbyterian, as originating with three presbyters of the church of England.

"But what right have you to exer-

cise the episcopal office?" To me the most manifest and clear. God has been pleased, by Mr Wesley, to raise up, in America and Europe, a numerous society, well known by the name of methodists. The whole body have invariably esteemed this man as their chief pastor, under Christ. He has constantly appointed all their religious officers from the highest to the lowest, by himself or his delegate. And we are fully persuaded, there is no church office which he judges expedient for the welfare of the people entrusted to his charge, but, as essential to his station, he has power to ordain. After long deliberation, he saw it his duty to form his society in America into an independent church; but he loved the most excellent liturgy of the church of England; he loved it's rites and ceremonies, and therefore adopted

them in most instances in the present case.

“ Besides, in addition to this, we have every qualification for an episcopal church, which that of Alexandria (a church of no small note in the primitive times) possessed for two hundred years. Our bishops or superintendents (as we rather call them) having been elected or received by the suffrage of the whole body of our ministers through the continent, assembled in general conference.

“ But don't you break the succession?” The uninterrupted succession of bishops is a point that has been long given up by the ablest protestant defenders of episcopacy. Bishop Hoadley himself, in his celebrated controversy with Dr Calamy, allows it to be unnecessary. His words are, “ To the thirteenth question I answer, that I think not an uninterrupted

line of succession of regularly ordained bishops necessary." He also grants the authenticity of the anecdote given us by St. Jerome, which informs us, that the church of Alexandria, mentioned above, had no regular succession, from the time of St. Mark the Evangelist, the first bishop of that church to the time of Dionysius, a space of two hundred years: but the college of presbyters, on the death of a bishop, elected another in his stead. We are also informed, from the Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians, written soon after the death of St. Paul, a writer whose works are next in precedence to the canon of scripture, and probably written by immediate inspiration, that the church of Corinth was then governed only by a college of presbyters. And from the Epistle of Polycarp to the church of Philippi, written in 116, we

also find that the christian Philippians were then governed only by a college of presbyters. So that the primitive christians were so far from esteeming the regular succession, as essential to the constitution of a christian church, that, in some instances, episcopacy itself was wholly omitted."

"But of all forms of church government, we think a moderate episcopacy the best. The executive power being lodged in the hands of one, or at least a few, vigour and activity are given to the resolves of the body, and those two essential requisites for any grand undertaking are sweetly united—calmness and wisdom in deliberating; and in the executive department, expedition and force.

"But are you not schismatics by your separation from the church?" A christian church is a body of professors, who

hold the fundamentals of the christian religion, in doctrine and practice. But we are not ignorant, we cannot be ignorant, that the chief part of the clergy and the members of the church of England (so called) do either tacitly or explicitly deny the doctrine of justification by faith, the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, and the witness of the Spirit of God, points which we esteem most fundamental, yea, essentially necessary to constitute a child of God. We are not, we cannot be ignorant, that they justify as innocent, many of the criminal pleasures of the world: card playing, dancing, theatrical amusements, &c. pleasures utterly inconsistent with union and communion with God. And though we admire their liturgy, and are determined to retain it with a few alterations, we cannot, we will not hold connexion

with them, till the holy spirit of God has made them see and feel the evil of the practices, and the importance of the doctrines mentioned above. And for this schism (if it must have the name) we are chearfully ready to answer at the bar of God.

“ Why then did you not separate before?” It has long been the desire of the majority of the preachers and people. But they submitted to the superior judgment of Mr Wesley, who, till the revolution, doubted of the propriety of the step.

“ But did not your preachers constantly exhort the people to attend the service of the church of England?” In the general they did, from a full persuasion, drawn from experience, that we had no other alternative to preserve our society, but an adherence to the church

of England, which was totally destitute of real discipline, or a formation of ourselves into an independent church; and some of them perhaps did this, with a degree of imprudence, which I cannot defend.”

Considering this stretch of authority as of great moment in the history of methodism, and as giving the sanction of Mr Wesley's name to a general and formal dissent, at some future period, we have been particular in stating the arguments by which he supported this violation of order, and of his own consistency: and we have stated them in the body of this work, rather than in an appendix, because we thought them essential to the narrative, and because we know how few will take the trouble to consult authorities not immediately connected with the facts to which they refer.

The letter signed by Mr Wesley, and addressed to the methodists in America, and the defence of these transactions, in the sermon of Dr Coke, we shall take the liberty to consider, with some exceptions, as proceeding from the same source. The latter is indeed more studied and elaborate than the former: but in each the tendency is the same: and though the preacher may have altered two or three phrases, or substituted a few sentences, there is no doubt, that the substance of it was the work of Mr Wesley. For this opinion we have more reasons than one. The language, in several passages, filiates itself. It is to be presumed, he would scarcely commit to another hand a trust so important, as an apology for such extraordinary proceedings. And above all, the stile and composition bear little resemblance to that of it's reputed author;

a few passages excepted, which certain characteristic traits have distinguished as his own.

It will scarcely be urged in these memoirs, as an objection to Mr Wesley's conduct, that he has "broken the succession." As we believe not a syllable of the uninterrupted succession of bishops, from the time of the apostles, we leave the examination of this question to those whose faith is more potent and extensive. Our objections are of another kind, and, we presume, much better founded.

We may just mention, though it were improper to lose much time in considering, some prudential reasons assigned for Mr Wesley's conduct. One of them is, that he "had desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one preacher, and could not prevail:" and another, that "had the Bishop ordained such as

he recommended, he would have expected to govern them." At the Bishop's refusal, none can wonder, who reflects, that this proposal was made, during the war in America, when it was not perfectly safe to send missionaries abroad; and that it was probable, a regular application would be made by the body of episcopalians in that country, for the consecration of a certain number of bishops, who might ordain the candidates, and save them the expence and danger of crossing the water. For the rest, nothing can be more plain. On the supposition of accomplishing their scheme of independency, it was obvious, that the English bishops could have no pretensions to govern the clergy on the continent: but, had not the revolution happened, it was equally rational to conclude, that they would

expect the clergy they should ordain, to be amenable to their jurisdiction.

When the revolution was completed, this connexion was instantly dissolved, and they now had no sort of dependence either on the state or the hierarchy of Great Britain. But why they should be congratulated on this liberty, in Mr Wesley's letter, it is not easy to determine. It is well known, that he was not friendly to the claims of America, in the contest betwixt her and the mother country; consequently, could be no enthusiast in favour of their civil liberties : and as his discipline was more rigid, and his authority more absolute than that of the governors of our church, the religious liberty they were promised, and upon which they are so particularly congratulated, could be little more than a name.

Much stress is laid on the doctrine of Sir Peter King, that “bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain.” To enter into this argument were superfluous. There is a much easier and shorter method of adjusting the debate; and that is, by denying the episcopal authority of Mr Wesley, on his own ground. If we mistake not, it is the doctrine of Sir Peter, and of the best authorities on this subject, that at the election of a bishop, in the first ages, there was a solemn convention of the presbyters and the people; and that from among the former, a bishop was elected, by the suffrages of the majority. The question therefore is, by what presbyters was Mr Wesley elected, in what form was he consecrated to the office, and what sort of a congregation was it, that assisted

in the solemnity? It is said, and so far as we have been able to discover, from the best authority, that he never was elected by any presbyters, or consecrated in any form either of the primitive or modern churches, and consequently, even allowing him his principles, he must have exercised, in the consecration of Dr Coke to the episcopacy, and the ordination of the presbyters for Scotland and America, an office to which he had no title. And, with the opinion he entertained of the authority of presbyters, it is a little strange, that he did not suffer himself to be consecrated by two or three clergymen, that he might be the more regularly qualified for the ordination of his candidates.

There is another point of view, in which it is equally clear, that Mr Wesley's ordinations were contrary to the

order of all churches, the primitive as well as the modern, as being neither episcopal nor presbyterian. He has always declared himself, not a presbyterian, but an episcopalian. As he was never either elected or consecrated to the episcopal office, it is impossible he could ordain as a bishop. On the other hand, though not a bishop, he did ordain in that character; and, of course, if the intention of the ordainer be of any consequence, his ordinations could not be presbyterian. So that, in whatever light we consider it, here is a capital flaw in the constitution of this new church. It's bishops are not bishops, and it's presbyters are not presbyters; the former not having been elected by a college of presbyters, since such a college did not exist; and the latter having been ordained by a self-created bishop, who could have

no legal jurisdiction, according to the usage of any church, ancient or modern.

The conduct of Mr Wesley in the assumption of the episcopal office having been frequently canvassed among the methodists, by letters, and in familiar conversation, he published a vindication of it in the Arminian Magazine, declaring himself “as true and scriptural a bishop as any in England, or in Europe;” founding his authority, partly on the etymology of the Greek word, which signifies an *overseer*; and partly, as we have seen already, on the doctrine of Sir Peter King, that bishops and presbyters are the same order.

To obviate the objection, that so uncanonical a step was in itself an act of schism, and laid a foundation for a general dissent, he published the same definition of the church which he gave Dr

Coke, to insert in his consecration sermon, and in which there was more ingenuity than argument. Taking hold of an expression in the articles, he defines the church, a *cætus credentium*; a company of believers; and insists, that from this church he does not separate. But in this case, the fallacy is palpable. Either the framers of our articles did not intend this as a definition of a particular, but rather of the catholic or universal church in every part of the world; or their sense of the word *believers* was not so limited and confined as that, in which it is constantly used by Mr Wesley. If the former was the case, it is plain, that the argument founded on this definition, is nothing more than a sophism: and if the latter, it is equally conclusive against the inference he would deduce. In defining a particular church, we are surely

not to lay down principles which it has in common with all the churches in the universe, but such as are peculiar to itself. “A company of faithful people or believers,” is not descriptive of a particular church: and as it may be presumed, that there is, in every church, a number of “believers,” by which term Mr Wesley means only those who are christians in the strictest sense of the word, in practice as well as in profession, it is easy to perceive, on the principle of this definition, that a man may be at once a member of all the churches in the world, however he may differ from them in doctrine or in discipline!

This reasoning was variously received. Those “simple ones, who loved simplicity,” and were thorough converts to the doctrine of implicit faith, considered it as unanswerable. Others, who had not

learned to receive sophistry for argument, were of another mind, and took care to express their disapprobation. The late Mr Henderson, of Pembroke, who was then a member of the university, informed the author of these remarks, that he wrote to Mr Wesley on this occasion, arguing against these proceedings, and desiring him to consult several writers, whom he pointed out. The answer was evasive. He had passed the Rubicon; and it was now too late to retreat. His conduct, in this stage of the business, was not to be examined, but vindicated: and, after a vague reply to Mr Henderson's arguments, he excused himself from going more deeply into the subject, by observing, that was he to consult all the authors his correspondent had recommended, his remnant of life would be inadequate to the task.

We farther object to Mr Wesley's assumption of the episcopal character, on other principles. We regard him, not as a presbyter of the primitive church, but as he always professed, of the church of England. In this church, there can be no dispute, whether bishops and presbyters are of the same order, and whether they mutually and indiscriminately ordain presbyters. Here, at least, the authority of each is not the same: and presbyters do not consecrate bishops. If so, does that presbyter, who consecrates bishops, and ordains presbyters by his own authority, in opposition to the institutions of his church, "violate no order, and invade no man's right?" If this be true, words must have lost their meaning. The order of the church says, that a bishop alone can ordain presbyters, or consecrate bishops. Surely then, a presby-

ter ordaining presbyters, or consecrating bishops, must necessarily violate the order of the church, and invade the right of his diocesan, by a formal usurpation of his office. The part of the world, to which the candidate is ordained, is totally out of the question. No presbyter can usurp the office of a bishop, and continue a member of the church of England; because such usurpation being an offence against one of its primary and most distinguishing institutions, is in itself a formal and express renunciation of that church. The dissolution of the jurisdiction of the English prelacy, in America, will not infer Mr Wesley's right to assume it. Rather than violate his consistency, as a clergyman, it had been much more prudent, to have left them to their own resources. They had a multitude of preachers, who, in the most

troublesome times, and when he had actually cast them off, managed their concerns with great success: nor is there any doubt that they might have continued to do so in future, without his interposition. And with regard to the want of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, he might have been certain, that either the legislature, or the people themselves would have taken care to supply that defect.

In the sermon we have extracted, it is asserted, that Dr Coke and his colleague, Mr Astbury, have the same episcopal qualifications with the church of Alexandria; for they were elected or received by the whole body of ministers through the continent, assembled in conference." We suspect not. They were in fact elected by Mr Wesley, who consecrated Dr Coke, and directed him to

do the same for his colleague. The same may be said of the presbyters, to whom he gave ordination at Bristol. And we are informed, that this business was conducted, not in a church, or any place of public worship; but in a private house; in the presence of a small number of witnesses, and with an air of mystery and caution, which afforded no obscure intimation of it's illegality. Of the reception of these bishops and presbyters, in America, we need not say much. They were obtruded upon them: and it is to be remembered, that the "ministers assembled in conference," who are said to have received them, were not ministers of any denomination, since they were never ordained, but plain methodist preachers.

The Doctor, perfectly satisfied with his own episcopal qualifications, under-

takes to support the authority of Mr Wesley in his appointment. The argument is simply this: he is “fully persuaded, since Mr Wesley has constantly appointed all the religious officers among the methodists, that there is no church-office, which he judges expedient for the welfare of the people, but, as essential to his station, he has a right to ordain.” This argument must surely have been intended for the mob. It may possibly suit some understandings. But we do not perceive it’s force. We smile; but are not convinced; and we think it a pity that the preacher could produce no better logic on so important an occasion. We suspect however, that he did mistake it for an argument. And we are the more inclined to this opinion, because we are presented, in one of his journals with another, in the same mood and f-

gure. On his arrival in America, in 1784, having opened Mr Wesley's plan, for the societies on the continent, to a preacher at New York, he informs us, that he highly approved it, and adds, "he presses me earnestly to make it public, because, as he MOST JUSTLY ARGUES, MR WESLEY HAS DETERMINED THE POINT; AND THEREFORE, IT IS NOT TO BE INVESTIGATED, BUT COMPLIED WITH." This too is the language of a protestant divine! And who can read it, without reflecting, how admirable a tool such a reasoner must have made for the Bonners and Gardiners, the prelates and the tyrants of the fifteenth century?

To cite Mr Wesley's former conduct as a proof of his right to do what he should think proper, in any subsequent period, may satisfy casuists of a certain description; and to some readers it may

be an argument *ad hominem* ; but to us it is *ignotum per ignotius* ; and, as it now stands, needs nothing but an inversion, to reduce it to the old circular argument of the Jesuits. Having adduced what Mr Wesley has done, in order to prove what he may do, nothing remains, but to advance what he may do, as an argument of the propriety of what he has done.

This new system of episcopacy has brought the methodists into a curious predicament. Here are two bodies of people, in Britain and in America, believing the same doctrines, observing the same mode of worship and general discipline, and closely connected with each other, who are yet, in one respect, totally separate and distinct. In Britain, they are churchmen ; in America, independents. In the former, it seems, no

reason appears for a separation from the church : while in the latter, because “ the clergy are wicked and corrupt, in doctrine and practice, because there subsists an antichristian union between the church and state ; because the bishops have paid no attention whatever to the welfare of the people, but filled the churches with the parasites and bottle-companions of the rich and great ; and because they justify card-playing, dancing, and theatrical amusements, we cannot, we will not,” says our preacher, “ hold connexion with them.”

From this mode of reasoning, it might be supposed, he had found something new, and till 1784, had never discovered, that there was an union between the church and state ; that all bishops, except the bishop of Man, are lords of parliament ; that the primate of all England

is constantly of the privy council; and that the crown is the fountain of preferment, as well ecclesiastical as civil! One would suppose too, he had never before heard, that some of the clergy play at cards, and that others of them, now and then, attend the theatre and other places of amusement!

But, to speak seriously, we have never heard, from any good authority, and we are convinced, there is no reason to suppose, that the clergy are at this moment more immoral in their deportment, or less scriptural in their doctrines, than they were many years ago, when the question of separation was first agitated in the conference, and when Mr Wesley published a pamphlet, to shew that no argument, taken from the immorality of the clergy, was sufficient to authorise a separation; and that such a

separation was improper, and had no warrant, either from scripture or reason. We shall be glad to learn how this gentleman proves, that the clergy are more trifling and licentious than they formerly were; and why he did not publicly declare himself on this subject, before he crossed the Atlantic, and print a sermon in England, declaring, as openly as he did in America, that he renounced a church, so universally corrupt!

It is said, "it had long been the desire of the majority of the preachers and people to separate, but that they submitted to Mr Wesley's superior judgment, who, till the revolution, doubted the propriety of the step." But how shall we reconcile this with what is granted in the same sermon? "The preachers in general constantly exhorted the people to attend the service of the church of

England, from a full persuasion, drawn from experience, that we had no alternative left, to preserve our society, but an adherence to the church of England (which was totally destitute of real discipline) or a formation of ourselves into an independent church." Now, if the majority of the preachers wished for a separation, how could they reconcile it to their consciences, to exhort their hearers to attend the service of the church? If they did so, while, at the same time, they desired to separate, they were guilty of the most egregious duplicity: and if they had not in general such a desire, the assertion that they had, is too unguarded.

As for any change of sentiment, said to be produced in Mr Wesley by the revolution, we hope, in this case, he is misrepresented. That such an event must

produce a change in civil policy, we can easily conceive; but that it could influence a judicious and pious individual, much less, many thousands of persons, in resolving on a separation from a church, of which, till that moment they had professed themselves members, we cannot understand. If the church was so corrupt, as she is represented in this sermon, we should suppose, that a conscientious man, under the influence of such a persuasion, would either have withdrawn as soon as he perceived it, or have continued in her communion, till a more gross and general corruption should have obliged him to retire. There is in one of the Reviews an observation to this effect: "A dissenter out of the church is more respectable than a dissenter in it." The maxim is a good one; and we will add another: the preservation of a society,

at the expence of sincerity, is too dear a purchase.

From the writings and professions of Mr Wesley, during thirty or forty years, from his known predilection for the church of England; and above all, from his own declarations, it is certain, that the steps taken toward a separation were in some degree involuntary. He often said, that he was “forced into them;” which will appear the more probable, from several remarks in his sermons, published so lately as 1788.

Speaking of the methodists, he says, “they cannot, they dare not, they will not separate from it (the church) while they can remain therein with a clear conscience. It is true, if any sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them, then they would be constrained to separate: but as this is not the case at pre-

sent, we rejoice to continue therein. If it be said, God could have made them a separate people, like the moravian brethren, I answer, this would have been a direct contradiction to his whole design in raising them up; namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination, leaving every one to hold his own opinions, and to follow his own mode of worship."

The following passage, though we suppose he meant it of his own society, is applicable to the same purpose: "I have spoken the more explicitly on this head, because so many of those, who profess much religion, have not the least conception of this matter, nor imagine such a separation to be any sin at all. They leave a christian society with as much unconcern, as they go out of one

room into another. They give occasion to all this complicated mischief, and wipe their mouth, and say, they have done no evil."

We have only to add, that some time before his death, Mr Wesley repented of the steps he had taken, and did all he could to counteract what he too plainly perceived, an increasing tendency toward a final separation from the church.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



Wesley, John, 1703-1791

Memoirs Of The Late Rev. John Wesley, A. M With A Review Of His Life And
Writings, And A History Of Methodism, From it's Commencement in 1729, to
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